

STRANGE SIGNPOSTS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF
THE FANTASTIC

EDITED BY ROGER ELWOOD
SAM MOSKOWITZ

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An Anthology of the Fantastic

Edited by Sam Moskowitz and Roger Elwood

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Brief words, when actions wait, are well;
The prompter's hand is on his bell;
The coming heroes, lovers, kings
Are idly lounging in the wings;
Behind the curtain's mystic fold,
The glowing future lies unrolled.

—BRET HARTE

Introduction:

The Other Side of the Curtain

A REFLECTION OF THE FUTURE

Bret Harte's lines are a fair description of the secret appeal that lies behind the popularity of science fiction-fantasy today—or at least one aspect of it—and what makes the writings of such old masters as Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe seem so amazing in retrospect. These men possessed the undeniable genius of forecasting happenings fifty years beyond their own time and age; and, most important, today's realities and trends reveal that they were more accurate than anyone could have supposed.

By the same token, the creations of present-day authors—Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, and others—we now realize could possibly contain truth-nuggets of future events. George Orwell's 1984 certainly seems to be prophetically close to full-blooded crystallization even at this very moment. To ascertain the validity of this, one has only to scan the columns written by such journalists as Edith Kermit Roosevelt and Henry J. Taylor, who protest against crosscurrents of wiretapping, big brotherism, and other profoundly disturbing details pictured in Orwell's masterpiece.

Thus, to the thinkers, science fiction-fantasy *can* provide rich

rewards by extrapolating current events; to the average reader, unconcerned with elusive intangibilities or esoteric matters—and this segment is by-and-large the largest—the interest lies in sheer entertainment value.

STRANGE SIGNPOSTS offers an autumn's golden harvest of stimulating and provocative reading for both the specialist *and* the everyday reader seeking an escapist route from the cares and anxieties of the world. The appeal to the non-scifi reader is enhanced by the inclusion of most of the names already mentioned as well as such respected creators as Luis P. Senarens, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Erckmann-Chatrian, H. P. Lovecraft, Edmond Hamilton, Harl Vincent, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack Williamson, and Robert Bloch. A number of these authors have made their mark in *other* areas as well, *i.e.*, Bloch as a scenarist and Clarke as a noted scientific non-fiction lecturer and author, for example.

The merits of these stories, however, are like flecks of gold on a rushing stream: they must be sought and uncovered, for only then can they be of value to the finder.

The Last Man was Mary Shelley's second major novel, yet it never received the acclaim that was its due because of the staggering success of her other important work, *Frankenstein*. *The Last Man* is, by every yardstick of quality, a superior story in its own right, remarkably free of dated passages. For this volume Sam Moskowitz has condensed the original novel without changing a single word of the author's prose. The story you will read is, simply speaking, down to its *basic* plot, freed of any extraneous dialogue, description, or other unnecessary exposition.

Poe's "Mellonta Tauta" has never been in a scifi-fantasy anthology before now. It is the exciting tale of the year 4000, when floating cables transmit messages across the Atlantic and when our present civilization has been forgotten, except for a few lonely monuments. This is, by the way, Poe's *only* tale of the future.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a highly original story, generally regarded as his greatest short work, concerning a scientist who raises his daughter in a hothouse, where she constantly breathes poison gas. At the point where her touch alone can instantly kill anyone who approaches her, she falls in love with a young man; and only then is she made to realize the full impact of the curse she must endure.

Erckmann-Chatrian's "Hans Schnap's Spy-Glass," a glass that transforms the thoughts of others to the inventor's point of view, allows the hero to see himself in particularly stimulating situations and pleasing attitudes. The team of Erckmann-Chatrian combined the skills of two famed 19th-century novelists and playwrights whose *The Bells* solidified the reputation of the great British actor, Henry Irving.

H. G. Wells's "The Chronic Argonauts" was the *first* version of the author's novel eventually entitled *The Time Machine*. This draft was written for the *Science School Journal* in 1887 when Wells was about twenty years old, and it has never been included in *any* anthology. In fact, Wells tried for years to buy all copies and suppress "The Chronic Argonauts," for it clearly shows the influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Jules Verne's *The Begum's Fortune*, of which we print an excerpt as a complete short story, is about the invention of a fantastic gun that can destroy an entire city with one shell. The velocity is so great that the shell breaks the gravitational pull of the earth and becomes the first earth satellite.

Luis P. Senarens' *Frank Reade Jr.—Search for a Lost Man* is an excerpt from a novel written in the 1890's. It describes a helicopter attack with dynamite sticks used to break up an Indian raid on a military stockade out West.

"The Whisperer in Darkness" by H. P. Lovecraft, a novelette of the discovery of a hideout of aliens from another world, shows how these aliens transform the brains of willing earthmen into metal cases to travel the universe with them. The author's superb use of language and gradual buildup of horror has made this a modern classic.

Edmond Hamilton's "The Man Who Saw the Future" is a gem. A man of the dark ages is accidentally transferred into the present, and when he returns to his own era, he attempts to explain what he saw.

Harl Vincent's "Prowler of the Wastelands" is an unusual story of the creation of a synthetic animal with the power and agility of a lion, as well as the intelligence of a human being, who attempts to forage for himself in a strange world of the future.

Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Skeleton Men of Jupiter" is one of the most recent and best of the popular *John Carter of Mars* series.

Ray Bradbury's "Doodad" has never previously been anthologized, one of the very few Bradbury stories about which this can

be said. It is an offbeat oddity about a store that sells gadgets manufactured in the future.

"The Cosmic Express" by Jack Williamson, "Castaway" by Arthur C. Clarke, and "One Way to Mars" by Robert Bloch are other stories which we felt were among the "strange signposts" of science fiction-fantasy development and turning points in the careers of the authors.

In each case, superior writing and plotting have elevated these stories to positions of importance.

The premise that scifi-fantasy authors have been particularly adept in gazing into their crystal balls to forecast the future should alert us to tread softly. For we have, in the past several years, read about futures ranging from atomic devastation to totalitarian. In most instances, these portraits of our future have been singularly unpleasant and uninviting.

What will the next great social revolution be? A Big-Brother-Is-Watching future state? And what after *that*, if it should come? Will civilization as we know it today be all but forgotten 200 years hence? Or will there *be* an earth at all, an earth of unpolluted streams and clear, clean air, with blue skies and maybe a few wind-tossed clouds?

Will we end in rubble and decay, tattered billboards, rusty machines, nameless cemeteries with nameless graves, poisonous air and dirt-clogged rivers and oceans? Or will we perhaps have a crisp, clean, computerized world with cold steel and electronic impulses and no more daring action than pushing a button to get a prepackaged breakfast, lunch, or dinner?

Both outcomes are indeed possible, if not probable, according to what course future events may take. For, surely, the seed-bed of either world *is* being cultivated right now. Whether one or the other emerges from its dormant state is a matter that only another century will see and reveal to the human race.

As you read the following stories, bear in mind the events the authors have described. For they may be a revelation of heroes or malignant phantoms that lurk behind the time curtain's mystic fold.

—Roger Elwood

Contents

The Last Man	13
BY MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY	
Mellonta Tauta	32
BY EDGAR ALLAN POE	
Rappaccini's Daughter	46
BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE	
Hans Schnap's Spy-Glass	74
BY ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN	
The Chronic Argonauts	83
BY H. G. WELLS	
The Begum's Fortune	105
BY JULES VERNE	
Frank Reade, Jr.'s, Air Wonder	118
BY LUIS P. SENARENS	
The Whisperer in Darkness	130
BY H. P. LOVECRAFT	
The Man Who Saw the Future	194
BY EDMOND HAMILTON	
Prowler of the Wastelands	208
BY HARL VINCENT	
Skeleton Men of Jupiter	223
BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS	

Doodad	278
BY RAY BRADBURY	
The Cosmic Express	291
BY JACK WILLIAMSON	
Castaway	303
BY ARTHUR C. CLARKE	
One Way to Mars	310
BY ROBERT BLOCH	

Strange Signposts

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) was the daughter of William Godwin, 18th-century radical, who favored dispensing with family, religion, government, and especially marriage; and Mary Wollstonecraft, a crusader for equal rights for women and free love (who nevertheless was properly married, and died giving birth to Mary). Mary Shelley married the great poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and at the age of 18 wrote *Frankenstein*, the novel which catapulted her to fame and has had a profound influence on science-fiction writing ever since. "The Last Man" was published in 1826. It was both a memorial to her late husband and a lament to the emptiness of a world without him. It is condensed here in Mary Shelley's own words. It is one of the earlier stories of the end of the human race, and is regarded by critics as second only to *Frankenstein* among her works.

The Last Man

BY MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

That the plague was not what is commonly called contagious, like the scarlet fever, or extinct small-pox, was proved. It was called an epidemic. But the grand question was still unsettled of how this epidemic was generated and increased. If infection depended upon the air, the air was subject to infection. As for instance, a typhus fever has been brought by ships to one sea-port town; yet the very people who brought it there, were incapable of communicating it in a town more fortunately situated. But how are we to judge of airs, and pronounce—in such a city plague will die unproductive; in such another, nature has provided for it a plentiful harvest? In the same way, individuals may escape ninety-nine times, and receive the death-blow at the hundredth; because bodies are sometimes in a state to reject the infection of malady, and at others, thirsty to imbibe it. These reflections made our legislators pause, before they could decide on the laws to be put in force. The evil was so wide-spreading, so violent and immedicable, that no care, no prevention could be judged superfluous, which even added a chance to our escape.

These were questions of prudence; there was no immediate necessity for an earnest caution. England was still secure. France,

Germany, Italy and Spain, were interposed, walls yet without a breach, between us and the plague. Our vessels truly were the sport of winds and waves, even as Gulliver was the toy of the Brobdingnagians; but we on our stable abode could not be hurt in life or limb by these eruptions of nature. We could not fear—we did not. Yet a feeling of awe, a breathless sentiment of wonder, a painful sense of the degradation of humanity, was introduced into every heart. Nature, our mother, and our friend, had turned on us a brow of menace. She showed us plainly, that, though she permitted us to assign her laws and subdue her apparent powers, yet, if she put forth but a finger, we must quake. She could take our glove, fringed with mountains, girded by the atmosphere, containing the condition of our being, and all that man's mind could invent or his force achieve; she could take the ball in her hand, and cast it into space, where life would be drunk up, and man and all his efforts for ever annihilated.

These speculations were rife among us; yet not the less we proceeded in our daily occupations, and our plans, whose accomplishment demanded the lapse of many years. No voice was heard telling us to hold! When foreign distresses came to be felt by us through the channels of commerce, we set ourselves to apply remedies. Subscriptions were made for the emigrants, and merchants bankrupt by the failure of trade. The English spirit awoke to its full activity, and, as it had ever done, set itself to resist the evil, and to stand in the breach which diseased nature had suffered chaos and death to make in the bounds and banks which had hitherto kept them out.

At the commencement of summer, we began to feel, that the mischief which had taken place in distant countries was greater than we had at first suspected. Quito was destroyed by an earthquake. Mexico laid waste by the united effects of storm, pestilence and famine. Crowds of emigrants inundated the west of Europe; and our island had become the refuge of thousands. In the mean time Ryland had been chosen Protector. He had sought this office with eagerness, under the idea of turning his whole forces to the suppression of the privileged orders of our community. His measures were thwarted, and his schemes interrupted by this new state of things. Many of the foreigners were utterly destitute; and their increasing numbers at length forbade a recourse to the usual modes of relief. Trade was stopped by the failure of the interchange of cargoes usual between us, and Amer-

ica, India, Egypt and Greece. A sudden break was made in the routine of our lives. In vain our Protector and his partizans sought to conceal this truth; in vain, day after day, he appointed a period for the discussion of the new laws concerning hereditary rank and privilege; in vain he endeavoured to represent the evil as partial and temporary. These disasters came home to so many bosoms, and, through the various channels of commerce, were carried so entirely into every class and division of the community, that of necessity they became the first question in the state, the chief subjects to which we must turn our attention.

Can it be true, each asked the other with wonder and dismay, that whole countries are laid waste, whole nations annihilated, by these disorders in nature? The vast cities of America, the fertile plains of Hindostan, the crowded abodes of the Chinese, are menaced with utter ruin. Where late the busy multitudes assembled for pleasure or profit, now only the sound of wailing and misery is heard. The air is empoisoned, and each human being inhales death, even while in youth and health, their hopes are in the flower. We called to mind the plague of 1348, when it was calculated that a third of mankind had been destroyed. As yet western Europe was uninfected; would it always be so?

Half England was desolate, when October came, and the equinoctial winds swept over the earth, chilling the ardours of the unhealthy season. The summer, which was uncommonly hot, had been protracted into the beginning of this month, when on the eighteenth a sudden change was brought about from summer temperature to winter frost. Pestilence then made a pause in her death-dealing career. Gasping, not daring to name our hopes, yet full even to the brim with intense expectation, we stood, as a shipwrecked sailor stands on a barren rock islanded by the ocean, watching a distant vessel, fancying that now it nears, and then again that it is bearing from sight. This promise of a renewed lease of life turned rugged natures to melting tenderness, and by contrast filled the soft with harsh and unnatural sentiments. When it seemed destined that all were to die, we were reckless of the how and when—now that the virulence of the disease was mitigated, and it appeared willing to spare some, each was eager to be among the elect, and clung to life with dastard tenacity. Instances of desertion became more frequent; and even murders, which made the hearer sick with horror, where the fear of contagion had armed those nearest in blood against each other. But

these smaller and separate tragedies were about to yield to a mightier interest—and, while we were promised calm from infectious influences, a tempest arose wilder than the winds, a tempest bred by the passions of man, nourished by his most violent impulses, unexampled and dire.

A number of people from North America, the relics of that populous continent, had set sail for the east with mad desire of change, leaving their native plains for lands not less afflicted than their own. Several hundreds landed in Ireland, about the first of November, and took possession of such vacant habitations as they could find; seizing upon the superabundant food, and the stray cattle. As they exhausted the produce of one spot, they went on to another. At length they began to interfere with the inhabitants, and strong in their concentrated numbers, ejected the natives from their dwellings, and robbed them of their winter store. A few events of this kind roused the fiery nature of the Irish; and they attacked the invaders. Some were destroyed; the major part escaped by quick and well ordered movements; and danger made them careful. Their numbers ably arranged; the very deaths among them concealed; moving on in good order, and apparently given up to enjoyment, they excited the envy of the Irish. The Americans permitted a few to join their band, and presently the recruits outnumbered the strangers—nor did they join with them, nor imitate the admirable order which, preserved by the Trans-Atlantic chiefs, rendered them at once secure and formidable. The Irish followed their tack in disorganized multitudes; each day encreasing; each day becoming more lawless. The Americans were eager to escape from the spirit they had roused, and, reaching the eastern shores of the island, embarked for England. Their incursion would hardly have been felt had they come alone; but the Irish, collected in unnatural numbers, began to feel the inroads of famine, and they followed in the wake of the Americans for England also. The crossing of the sea could not arrest their progress. The harbours of the desolate sea-ports of the west of Ireland were filled with vessels of all sizes, from the man of war to the small fishers' boat, which lay sailorless, and rotting on the lazy deep. The emigrants embarked by hundreds, and unfurling their sails with rude hands, made strange havoc of buoy and cordage. Those who modestly betook themselves to the smaller craft, for the most part achieved their watery journey in safety. Some, in the true spirit of reckless enterprise, went on board a

ship of an hundred and twenty guns; the vast hull drifted with the tide out of the bay, and after many hours its crew of landsmen contrived to spread a great part of her enormous canvass—the wind took it, and while a thousand mistakes of the helmsman made her present her head now to one point, and now to another, the vast fields of canvass that formed her sails flapped with a sound like that of a huge cataract; or such as a sea-like forest may give forth when buffeted by an equinoctial north-wind. The port-holes were open, and with every sea, which as she lurched, washed her decks, they received whole tons of water. The difficulties were increased by a fresh breeze which began to blow, whistling among the shrowds, dashing the sails this way and that, and rending them with horrid split, and such whirl as may have visited the dreams of Milton, when he imagined the winnowing of the arch-fiend's van-like wings, which encreased the uproar of wild chaos. These sounds were mingled with the roaring of the sea, the splash of the chafed billows round the vessel's sides, and the gurgling up of the water in the hold. The crew, many of whom had never seen the sea before, felt indeed as if heaven and earth came ruining together, as the vessel dipped her bows in the waves, or rose high upon them. Their yells were drowned in the clamour of elements, and the thunder rivings of their unwieldy habitation—they discovered at last that the water gained on them, and they betook themselves to their pumps; they might as well have laboured to empty the ocean by bucketfuls. As the sun went down, the gale encreased; the ship seemed to feel her danger, she was now completely water-logged, and presented other indications of settling before she went down. The bay was crowded with vessels, whose crews, for the most part, were observing the uncouth sportings of this huge unwieldy machine—they saw her gradually sink; the waters now rising above her lower decks—they could hardly wink before she had utterly disappeared, nor could the place where the sea had closed over her be at all discerned. Some few of her crew were saved, but the greater part clinging to her cordage and masts went down with her, to rise only when death loosened their hold.

This event caused many of those who were about to sail, to put foot again on firm land, ready to encounter any evil rather than to rush into the yawning jaws of the pitiless ocean. But these were few, in comparison to the numbers who actually crossed. Many went up as high as Belfast to ensure a shorter passage, and then

journeying south through Scotland, they were joined by the poorer natives of that country, and all poured with one consent into England.

Such incursions struck the English with affright, in all those towns where there was still sufficient population to feel the change. There was room enough indeed in our hapless country for twice the number of invaders; but their lawless spirit instigated them to violence; they took a delight in thrusting the possessors from their houses; in seizing on some mansion of luxury, where the noble dwellers secluded themselves in fear of the plague; in forcing these of either sex to become their servants and purveyors; till, the ruin complete in one place, they removed their locust visitation to another. When unopposed they spread their ravages wide; in cases of danger they clustered, and by dint of numbers overthrew their weak and despairing foes. They came from the east and the north, and directed their course without apparent motive, but unanimously towards our unhappy metropolis.

Communication had been to a great degree cut off through the paralyzing effects of pestilence, so that the van of our invaders had proceeded as far as Manchester and Derby, before we received notice of their arrival. They swept the country like a conquering army, burning—laying waste—murdering. The lower and vagabond English joined with them. Some few of the Lords Lieutenant who remained, endeavoured to collect the militia—but the ranks were vacant, panic seized on all, and the opposition that was made only served to increase the audacity and cruelty of the enemy. They talked of taking London, conquering England—calling to mind the long detail of injuries which had for many years been forgotten. Such vaunts displayed their weakness, rather than their strength—yet still they might do extreme mischief, which, ending in their destruction, would render them at last objects of compassion and remorse.

We were now taught how, in the beginning of the world, mankind clothed their enemies in impossible attributes—and how details proceeding from mouth to mouth, might, like Virgil's ever-growing Rumour, reach the heavens with her brow, and clasp Hesperus and Lucifer with her outstretched hands. Gorgon and Centaur, dragon and iron-hoofed lion, vast sea-monster and gigantic hydra, were but types of the strange and appalling accounts brought to London concerning our invaders. Their landing

was long unknown, but having now advanced within an hundred miles of London, the country people flying before them arrived in successive troops, each exaggerating the numbers, fury, and cruelty of the assailants. Tumult filled the before quiet streets—women and children deserted their homes, escaping they knew not whither—fathers, husbands, and sons, stood trembling, not for themselves, but for their loved and defenceless relations. As the country people poured into London, the citizens fled southwards—they climbed the higher edifices of the town, fancying that they could discern the smoke and flames the enemy spread around them. As Windsor lay, to a great degree, in the line of march from the west, I removed my family to London, assigning the Tower for their sojourn, and joining Adrian, acted as his Lieutenant in the coming struggle.

We employed only two days in our preparations, and made good use of them. Artillery and arms were collected; the remnants of such regiments, as could be brought through many losses into any show of muster, were put under arms, with that appearance of military discipline which might encourage our own party, and seem most formidable to the disorganized multitude of our enemies. Even music was not wanting: banners floated in the air, and the shrill fife and loud trumpet breathed forth sounds of encouragement and victory. A practised ear might trace an undue faltering in the step of the soldiers; but this was not occasioned so much by fear of the adversary, as by disease, by sorrow, and by fatal prognostications, which often weighed most potently on the brave, and quelled the manly heart to abject subjection.

Adrian led the troops. He was full of care. It was small relief to him that our discipline should gain us success in such a conflict; while plague still hovered to equalize the conqueror and the conquered, it was not victory that he desired, but bloodless peace. As we advanced, we were met by bands of peasantry, whose almost naked condition, whose despair and horror, told at once the fierce nature of the coming enemy. The senseless spirit of conquest and thirst of spoil blinded them, while with insane fury they deluged the country in ruin. The sight of the military restored hope to those who fled, and revenge took place of fear. They inspired the soldiers with the same sentiment. Languor was changed to ardour, the slow step converted to a speedy pace, while the hollow murmur of the multitude, inspired by one feeling, and that deadly, filled the air, drowning the clang of arms and sound of

music. Adrian perceived the change, and feared that it would be difficult to prevent them from wreaking their utmost fury on the Irish. He rode through the lines, charging the officers to restrain the troops, exhorting the soldiers, restoring order, and quieting in some degree the violent agitation that swelled every bosom.

We first came upon a few stragglers of the Irish at St. Albans. They retreated, and, joining others of their companions, still fell back, till they reached the main body. Tidings of an armed and regular opposition recalled them to a sort of order. They made Buckingham their head-quarters, and scouts were sent out to ascertain our situation. We remained for the night at Luton. In the morning a simultaneous movement caused us each to advance. It was early drawn, and the air, impregnated with freshest odour, seemed in idle mockery to play with our banners, and bore onwards towards the enemy the music of the bands, the neighings of the horses, and regular step of the infantry. The first sound of martial instruments that came upon our undisciplined foe, inspired surprise, not unmingled with dread. It spoke of other days, of days of concord and order; it was associated with times when plague was not, and man lived beyond the shadow of imminent fate. The pause was momentary. Soon we heard their disorderly clamour, the barbarian shouts, the untimed step of thousands coming on in disarray. Their troops now came pouring on us from the open country or narrow lanes; a large extent of unenclosed fields lay between us; we advanced to the middle of this, and then made a halt: being somewhat on superior ground, we could discern the space they covered. When their leaders perceived us drawn out in opposition, they also gave the word to halt, and endeavoured to form their men into some imitation of military discipline. The first ranks had muskets; some were mounted, but their arms were such as they had seized during their advance, their horses those they had taken from the peasantry; there was no uniformity, and little obedience, but their shouts and wild gestures showed the untamed spirit that inspired them. Our soldiers received the word, and advanced to quickest time, but in perfect order: their uniform dresses, the gleam of their polished arms, their silence, and looks of sullen hate, were more appalling than the savage clamour of our innumerable foe. Thus coming nearer and nearer each other, the howls and shouts of the Irish increased; the English proceeded in obedience to their officers, until they came near enough to distinguish the faces

of their enemies; the sight inspired them with fury: with one cry, that rent heaven and was re-echoed by the furthest lines, they rushed on; they disdained the use of the bullet, but with fixed bayonet dashed among the opposing foe, while the ranks opening at intervals, the matchmen lighted the cannon, whose deafening roar and blinding smoke filled up the horror of the scene.

I was beside Adrian; a moment before he had again given the word to halt, and had remained a few yards distant from us in deep meditation: he was forming swiftly his plan of action, to prevent the effusion of blood; the noise of cannon, the sudden rush of the troops, and yell of the foe, startled him: with flashing eyes he exclaimed, "Not one of these must perish!" and plunging the rowels into his horse's sides, he dashed between the conflicting bands. We, his staff, followed him to surround and protect him; obeying his signal, however, we fell back somewhat. The soldiery perceiving him, paused in their onset; he did not swerve from the bullets that passed near him, but rode immediately between the opposing lines. Silence succeeded to clamour; about fifty men lay on the ground dying or dead. Adrian raised his sword in act to speak: "By whose command," he cried, addressing his own troops, "do you advance? Who ordered your attack? Fall back; these misguided men shall not be slaughtered, while I am your general. Sheath your weapons; these are your brothers, commit not fratricide; soon the plague will not leave one for you to glut your revenge upon: will you be more pitiless than pestilence? As you honour me—as you worship God, in whose image those also are created—as your children and friends are dear to you,—shed not a drop of precious human blood."

He spoke with outstretched hand and winning voice, and then turning to our invaders, with a severe brow, he commanded them to lay down their arms: "Do you think," he said, "that because we are wasted by plague, you can overcome us; the plague is also among you, and when ye are vanquished by famine and disease, the ghosts of those you have murdered will arise to bid you not hope in death. Lay down your arms, barbarous and cruel men—men whose hands are stained with the blood of the innocent, whose souls are weighed down by the orphan's cry! We shall conquer, for the right is on our side; already your cheeks are pale—the weapons fall from your nerveless grasp. Lay down your arms, fellow men! brethren! Pardon, succour, and brotherly love await your repentance. You are dear to us, because you wear the

frail shape of humanity; each one among you will find a friend and host among these forces. Shall man be the enemy of man, while plague, the foe to all, even now is above us, triumphing in our butchery, more cruel than her own?"

Each army paused. On our side the soldiers grasped their arms firmly, and looked with stern glances on the foe. These had not thrown down their weapons, more from fear than the spirit of contest; they looked at each other, each wishing to follow some example given him,—but they had no leader. Adrian threw himself from his horse, and approaching one of those just slain: "He was a man," he cried, "and he is dead. O quickly bind up the wounds of the fallen—let not one die; let not one more soul escape through your merciless gashes, to relate before the throne of God the tale of fratricide; bind up their wounds—restore them to their friends. Cast away the hearts of tigers that burn in your breasts; throw down those tools of cruelty and hate; in this pause of exterminating destiny, let each man be brother, guardian, and stay to the other. Away with those blood-stained arms, and hasten some of you to bind up these wounds."

As he spoke, he knelt on the ground, and raised in his arms a man from whose side the warm tide of life gushed—the poor wretch gasped—so still had either host become, that his moans were distinctly heard, and every heart, late fiercely bent on universal massacre, now beat anxiously in hope and fear for the fate of this one man. Adrian tore off his military scarf and bound it round the sufferer—it was too late—the man heaved a deep sigh, his head fell back, his limbs lost their sustaining power.—"He is dead!" said Adrian, as the corpse fell from his arms on the ground, and he bowed his head in sorrow and awe. The fate of the world seemed bound up in the death of this single man. On either side the bands threw down their arms, even the veterans wept, and our party held out their hands to their foes, while a gush of love and deepest amity filled every heart. The two forces mingling, unarmed and hand in hand, talking only how each might assist the other, the adversaries conjoined; each repenting, the one side their former cruelties, the other their late violence, they obeyed the orders of the General to proceed towards London.

Part II

In the autumn of this year 2096, the spirit of emigration crept in among the few survivors, who, congregating from various parts of England, met in London. This spirit existed as a breath, a wish, a far off thought, until communicated to Adrian, who imbibed it with ardour, and instantly engaged himself in plans for its execution. The fear of immediate death vanished with the heats of September. Another winter was before us, and we might elect our mode of passing it to the best advantage. Perhaps in rational philosophy none could be better chosen than this scheme of migration, which would draw us from the immediate scene of our woe, and, leading us through pleasant and picturesque countries, amuse for a time our despair. The idea once broached, all were impatient to put it in execution.

We were still at Windsor; our renewed hopes medicined the anguish we had suffered from the late tragedies. The death of many of our inmates had weaned us from the fond idea, that Windsor Castle was a spot sacred from the plague; but our lease of life was renewed for some months, and even Idris lifted her head, as a lily after a storm, when a last sunbeam tinges its silver cup. Just at this time Adrian came down to us; his eager looks shewed us that he was full of some scheme. He hastened to take me aside, and disclosed to me with rapidity his plan of emigration from England.

To leave England for ever! to turn from its polluted fields and groves, and, placing the sea between us, to quit it, as a sailor quits the rock on which he has been wrecked, when the saving ship rides by. Such was his plan.

To leave the country of our fathers, made holy by their graves!—We could not feel even as a voluntary exile of old, who might for pleasure or convenience forsake his native soil; though thousands of miles might divide him, England was still a part of him, as he of her. He heard of the passing events of the day; he knew that, if he returned, and resumed his place in society, the entrance was still open, and it required but the will, to surround himself at once with the associations and habits of boyhood. Not so with us, the remnant. We left none to represent us, none to

repeople the desert land, and the name of England died, when we left her,

In vagabond pursuit of dreadful safety.

Yet let us go! England is in her shroud,—we may not enchain ourselves to a corpse. Let us go—the world is our country now, and we will choose for our residence its most fertile spot. Shall we, in these desert halls, under this wintry sky, sit with closed eyes and folded hands, expecting death? Let us rather go out to meet it gallantly:—or perhaps—for all this pendulous orb, this fair gem in the sky's diadem, is not surely plague-stricken—perhaps, in some secluded nook, amidst eternal spring, and waving trees, and purling streams, we may find Life. The world is vast, and England, though her many fields and wide spread woods seem interminable, is but a small part of her. At the close of a day's march over high mountains and through snowy vallies, we may come upon health, and committing our loved ones to its charge, replant the uprooted tree of humanity, and send to late posterity the tale of the ante-pestilential race, the heroes and sages of the lost state of things.

We had expected this moment with eagerness, for now we had accomplished the worst part of our drear journey, and Switzerland was near at hand. Yet how could we congratulate ourselves on any event thus imperfectly fulfilled? Were these miserable beings, who, worn and wretched, passed in sorrowful procession, the sole remnants of the race of man, which, like a flood, had once spread over and possessed the whole earth? It had come down clear and unimpeded from its primal mountain source in Ararat, and grew from a puny streamlet to a vast perennial river, generation after generation flowing on ceaselessly. The same, but diversified, it grew, and swept onwards towards the absorbing ocean, whose dim shores we now reached. It had been the mere plaything of nature, when first it crept out of uncreative void into light; but thought brought forth power and knowledge; and, clad with these, the race of man assumed dignity and authority. It was then no longer the mere gardener of earth, or the shepherd of her flocks; "it carried with it an imposing and majestic aspect; it had a pedigree and illustrious ancestors; it had its gallery of portraits, its monumental inscriptions, its records and titles."^{*}

* Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.

This was all over, now that the ocean of death had sucked in the slackening tide, and its source was dried up. We first had bidden adieu to the state of things which having existed many thousand years, seemed eternal; such a state of government, obedience, traffic, and domestic intercourse, as had moulded our hearts and capacities, as far back as memory could reach. Then to patriotic zeal, to the arts, to reputation, to enduring fame, to the name of country, we had bidden farewell. We saw depart all hope of retrieving our ancient state—all expectation, except the feeble one of saving our individual lives from the wreck of the past. To preserve these we had quitted England—England, no more; for without her children, what name could that barren island claim? With tenacious grasp we clung to such rule and order as could best save us; trusting that, if a little colony could be preserved, that would suffice at some remoter period to restore the lost community of mankind.

But the game is up! We must all die; nor leave survivor nor heir to the wide inheritance of earth. We must all die! The species of man must perish; his frame of exquisite workmanship; the wondrous mechanism of his senses; the noble proportion of his godlike limbs; his mind, the throned king of these; must perish. Will the earth still keep her place among the planets; will she still journey with unmarked regularity round the sun; will the seasons change, the trees adorn themselves with leaves, and flowers shed their fragrance, in solitude? Will the mountains remain unmoved, and streams still keep a downward course towards the vast abyss; will the tides rise and fall, and the winds fan universal nature; will beasts pasture, birds fly, and fishes swim, when man, the lord, possessor, perceiver, and recorder of all these things, has passed away, as though he had never been? O, what mockery is this! Surely death is not death, and humanity is not extinct; but merely passed into other shapes, unsubjected to our perceptions. Death is a vast portal, an high road to life: let us hasten to pass; let us exist no more in this living death, but die that we may live!

Now—soft awhile—have I arrived so near the end? Yes! it is all over now—a step or two over those new made graves, and the wearisome way is done. Can I accomplish my task? Can I streak my paper with words capacious of the grand conclusion? Arise,

black Melancholy! quit thy Cimmerian solitude! Bring with thee murky fogs from hell, which may drink up the day; bring blight and pestiferous exhalations, which, entering the hollow caverns and breathing places of earth, may fill her stony veins with corruption, so that not only herbage may no longer flourish, the trees may rot, and the rivers run with gall—but the everlasting mountains be decomposed, and the mighty deep putrify, and the genial atmosphere which clips the globe, lose all powers of generation and sustenance. Do this, sad visaged power, while I write, while eyes read these pages.

And who will read them? Beware, tender offspring of the reborn world—beware, fair being, with human heart, yet untamed by care, and human brow, yet unploughed by time—beware, lest the cheerful current of thy blood be checked, thy golden locks turn grey, thy sweet dimpling smiles be changed to fixed, harsh wrinkles! Let not day look on these lines, lest garish day waste, turn pale, and die. Seek a cypress grove, whose moaning boughs will be harmony befitting; seek some cave, deep embowered in earth's dark entrails, where no light will penetrate, save that which struggles, red and flickering, through a single fissure, staining thy page with grimmest livery of death.

I found the granaries of Rome well stored with grain, and particularly with Indian corn; this product requiring less art in its preparation for food, I selected as my principal support. I now found the hardships and lawlessness of my youth turn to account. A man cannot throw off the habits of sixteen years. Since that age, it is true, I had lived luxuriously, or at least surrounded by all the conveniences civilization afforded. But before that time, I had been "as uncouth a savage, as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome"—and now, in Rome itself, robber and shepherd propensities, similar to those of its founder, were of advantage to its sole inhabitant. I spent the morning riding and shooting in the Campagna—I passed long hours in the various galleries—I gazed at each statue, and lost myself in a reverie before many a fair Madonna or beauteous nymph. I haunted the Vatican, and stood surrounded by marble forms of divine beauty. Each stone deity was possessed by sacred gladness, and the eternal fruition of love. They looked on me with unsympathizing complacency, and often in wild accents I reproached them for their supreme indifference—for they were human shapes, the human form divine was mani-

fest in each fairest limb and lineament. The perfect moulding brought with it the idea of colour and motion; often, half in bitter mockery, half in self-delusion, I clasped their icy proportions, and, coming between Cupid and his Psyche's lips, pressed the unconceiving marble.

I endeavoured to read. I visited the libraries of Rome. I selected a volume, and, choosing some sequestered, shady nook, on the banks of the Tiber, or opposite the fair temple in the Borghese Gardens, or under the old pyramid of Cestius, I endeavoured to conceal me from myself, and immerse myself in the subject traced on the pages before me. As if in the same soil you plant nightshade and a myrtle tree, they will each appropriate the mould, moisture, and air administered, for the fostering their several properties—so did my grief find sustenance, and power of existence, and growth, in what else had been divine manna, to feed radiant meditation. Ah! while I streak this paper with the tale of what my so named occupations were—while I shape the skeleton of my days—my hand trembles—my heart pants, and my brain refuses to lend expression, or phrase, or idea, by which to image forth the veil of unutterable woe that clothed these bare realities. Oh, worn and beating heart, may I dissect thy fibres, and tell how in each unmitigable misery, sadness, dire, repinings, and despair, existed? May I record my many ravings—the wild curses I hurled at torturing nature—and how I have passed days shut out from light and food—from all except the burning hell alive in my own bosom?

I was presented, meantime, with one other occupation, the one best fitted to discipline my melancholy thoughts, which strayed backwards, over many a ruin, and through many a flowery glade, even to the mountain recess, from which in early youth I had first emerged.

During one of my rambles through the habitations of Rome, I found writing materials on a table in an author's study. Parts of a manuscript lay scattered about. It contained a learned disquisition on the Italian language; one page an unfinished dedication to posterity, for whose profit the writer had sifted and selected the niceties of this harmonious language—to whose everlasting benefit he bequeathed his labours.

I also will write a book, I cried—for whom to read?—to whom

dedicated? And then with silly flourish (what so capricious and childish as despair?) I wrote,

DEDICATION
TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD.
SHADOWS, ARISE, AND READ YOUR FALL!
BEHOLD THE HISTORY OF THE
LAST MAN.

Yet, will not this world be re-peopled, and the children of a saved pair of lovers, in some to me unknown and unattainable seclusion, wandering to these prodigious relics of the ante-pestilential race, seek to learn how beings so wondrous in their achievements, with imagination infinite, and powers godlike, had departed from their home to an unknown country?

I will write and leave in this most ancient city, this "world's sole monument," a record of these things. I will leave a monument of the existence of Verney, the Last Man. At first I thought only to speak of plague, of death, and last, of desertion; but I lingered fondly on my early years, and recorded with sacred zeal the virtues of my companions. They have been with me during the fulfilment of my task. I have brought it to an end—I lift my eyes from my paper—again they are lost to me. Again I feel that I am alone.

A year has passed since I have been thus occupied. The seasons have made their wonted round, and decked this eternal city in a changeful robe of surpassing beauty. A year has passed; and I no longer *guess* at my state or my prospects—loneliness is my familiar, sorrow my inseparable companion. I have endeavoured to brave the storm—I have endeavoured to school myself to fortitude—I have sought to imbue myself with the lessons of wisdom. It will not do. My hair has become nearly grey—my voice, unused now to utter sound, comes strangely on my ears. My person, with its human powers and features, seem to me a monstrous excrescence of nature. How express in human language a woe human being until this hour never knew! How give intelligible expression to a pang none but I could ever understand!—No one has entered Rome. None will ever come. I smile bitterly at the delusion I have so long nourished, and still more, when I reflect that I have exchanged it for another as delusive, as false, but to which I now cling with the same fond trust.

Winter has come again; and the gardens of Rome have lost their leaves—the sharp air comes over the Campagna, and has driven its brute inhabitants to take up their abode in the many dwellings of the deserted city—frost has suspended the gushing fountains—and Trevi has stilled her eternal music. I had made a rough calculation, aided by the stars, by which I endeavoured to ascertain the first day of the new year. In the old out-worn age, the Sovereign Pontiff was used to go in solemn pomp, and mark the renewal of the year by driving a nail in the gate of the temple of Janus. On that day I ascended St. Peter's, and carved on its topmost stone the æra 2100, last year of the world!

My only companion was a dog, a shaggy fellow, half water and half shepherd's dog, whom I found tending sheep in the Campagna. His master was dead, but nevertheless he continued fulfilling his duties in expectation of his return. If a sheep strayed from the rest, he forced it to return to the flock, and sedulously kept off every intruder. Riding in the Campagna I had come upon his sheep-walk, and for some time observed his repetition of lessons learned from man, now useless, though unforgotten. His delight was excessive when he saw me. He sprung up to my knees; he capered round and round, wagging his tail, with the short, quick bark of pleasure: he left his fold to follow me, and from that day has never neglected to watch by and attend on me, shewing boisterous gratitude whenever I caressed or talked to him. His pattering steps and mine alone were heard, when we entered the magnificent extent of nave and aisle of St. Peter's. We ascended the myriad steps together, when on the summit I achieved my design, and in rough figures noted the date of the last year. I then turned to gaze on the country, and to take leave of Rome. I had long determined to quit it, and I now formed the plan I would adopt for my future career, after I had left this magnificent abode.

A solitary being is by instinct a wanderer, and that I would become. A hope of amelioration always attends on change of place, which would even lighten the burthen of my life. I had been a fool to remain in Rome all this time: Rome noted for Mal'aria, the famous caterer for death. But it was still possible, that, could I visit the whole extent of earth, I should find in some part of the wide extent a survivor. Methought the sea-side was the most probable retreat to be chosen by such a one. If left alone in an inland district, still they could not continue in the spot

where their last hopes had been extinguished; they would journey on, like me, in search of a partner for their solitude, till the watery barrier stopped their further progress.

To that water—cause of my woes, perhaps now to be their cure, I would betake myself. Farewell, Italy!—farewell, thou ornament of the world, matchless Rome, the retreat of the solitary one during long months!—to civilized life—to the settled home and succession of monotonous days, farewell! Peril will now be mine; and I hail her as a friend—death will perpetually cross my path, and I will meet him as a benefactor; hardship, inclement weather, and dangerous tempests will be my sworn mates. Ye spirits of storm, receive me! ye powers of destruction, open wide your arms, and clasp me for ever! if a kinder power have not decreed another end, so that after long endurance I may reap my reward, and again feel my heart beat near the heart of another like to me.

Tiber, the road which is spread by nature's own hand, threading her continent, was at my feet, and many a boat was tethered to the banks. I would with a few books, provisions, and my dog, embark in one of these and float down the current of the stream into the sea; and then, keeping near land, I would coast the beauteous shores and sunny promontories of the blue Mediterranean, pass Naples, along Calabria, and would dare the twin perils of Scylla and Charybdis; then, with fearless aim, (for what had I to lose?) skim ocean's surface towards Malta and the further Cyclades. I would avoid Constantinople, the sight of whose well-known towers and inlets belonged to another state of existence from my present one; I would coast Asia Minor, and Syria, and, passing the seven-mouthed Nile, steer northward again, till losing sight of forgotten Carthage and deserted Lybia, I should reach the pillars of Hercules. And then—no matter where—the oozy caves, and soundless depths of ocean may be my dwelling, before I accomplish this long-drawn voyage, or the arrow of disease find my heart as I float singly on the weltering Mediterranean; or, in some place I touch at, I may find what I seek—a companion; or if this may not be—to endless time, decrepid and grey headed—youth already in the grave with those I love—the lone wanderer will still unfurl his sail, and clasp the tiller—and, still obeying the breezes of heaven, for ever round another and another promontory, anchoring in another and another bay, still ploughing seedless ocean, leaving behind the verdant land of

native Europe, adown the tawny shore of Africa, having weathered the fierce seas of the Cape, I may moor my worn skiff in a creek, shaded by spicy groves of the odorous islands of the far Indian ocean.

These are wild dreams. Yet since, now a week ago, they came on me, as I stood on the height of St. Peter's, they have ruled my imagination. I have chosen my boat, and laid in my scant stores. I have selected a few books; the principal are Homer and Shakespeare—But the libraries of the world are thrown open to me—and in any port I can renew my stock. I form no expectation of alteration for the better; but the monotonous present is intolerable to me. Neither hope nor joy are my pilots—restless despair and fierce desire of change lead me on. I long to grapple with danger, to be excited by fear, to have some task, however slight or voluntary, for each day's fulfilment. I shall witness all the variety of appearance, that the elements can assume—I shall read fair augury in the rainbow—menace in the cloud—some lesson or record dear to my heart in everything. Thus around the shores of deserted earth, while the sun is high, and the moon waxes or wanes, angels, the spirits of the dead, and the ever-open eye of the Supreme, will behold the tiny bark, freighted with Verney—the LAST MAN.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is unquestionably the originator of what is regarded as modern science fiction, for he actually outlined the theory of buttressing each sequence of his story with an air of scientific validity. Along with his tales of horror and fantasy Poe wrote many science-fiction stories. "Mellonta Tauta" appeared in *Codey's Lady's Book* for Feb., 1849, during the last year of Poe's life. The story was written to support a new theory of the universe contained in his book, *Eureka, a Prose Poem*, published by Putnam in 1848. It takes place in the year 2848 and records certain scientific advances of the future. Many readers may be surprised by the humor that enters into "Mellonta Tauta," but Poe sometimes wrote stories in this vein.

Mellonta Tauta

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

ON BOARD BALLOON "SKYLARK," APRIL 1, 1848.

Now, my dear friend—now, for your sins, you are to suffer the infliction of a long gossiping letter. I tell you distinctly that I am going to punish you for all your impertinences by being as tedious, as discursive, as incoherent, and as unsatisfactory as possible. Besides, here I am, cooped up in a dirty balloon, with some one or two hundred of the *canaille*, all bound on a *pleasure* excursion (what a funny idea some people have of pleasure!) and I have no prospect of touching *terra firma* for a month at least. Nobody to talk to. Nothing to do. When one has nothing to do, then is the time to correspond with one's friends. You perceive, then, why it is that I write you this letter—it is on account of my *ennui* and your sins.

Get ready your spectacles and make up your mind to be annoyed. I mean to write at you every day during this odious voyage.

Heigho! when will any *Invention* visit the human pericranium? Are we forever to be doomed to the thousand inconveniences of the balloon? Will *nobody* contrive a more expeditious mode of progress? The jog-trot movement, to my thinking, is little less

than positive torture. Upon my word we have not made more than a hundred miles the hour since leaving home! The very birds beat us—at least some of them. I assure you that I do not exaggerate at all. Our motion, no doubt, seems slower than it actually is—this on account of our having no objects about us by which to estimate our velocity, and on account of our going with the wind. To be sure, whenever we meet a balloon we have a chance of perceiving our rate, and then, I admit, things do not appear so very bad. Accustomed as I am to this mode of travelling, I can not get over a kind of giddiness whenever a balloon passes us in a current directly overhead. It always seems to me like an immense bird of prey about to pounce upon us and carry us off in its claws. One went over us this morning about sunrise, and so nearly overhead that its drag-rope actually brushed the network suspending our car, and caused us very serious apprehension. Our captain said that if the material of the bag had been the trumpery varnished "silk" of five hundred or a thousand years ago, we should inevitably have been damaged. This silk, as he explained it to me, was a fabric composed of the entrails of a species of earthworm. The worm was carefully fed on mulberries—a kind of fruit resembling a watermelon—and, when sufficiently fat, was crushed in a mill. The paste thus arising was called *papyrus* in its primary state, and went through a variety of processes until it finally became "silk." Singular to relate, it was once much admired as an article of *female dress*! Balloons were also very generally constructed from it. A better kind of material, it appears, was subsequently found in the down surrounding the seed-vessels of a plant vulgarly called *euphorbium*, and at that time botanically termed milk-weed. This latter kind of silk was designated as silk-buckingham, on account of its superior durability, and was usually prepared for use by being varnished with a solution of gum caoutchouc—a substance which in some respects must have resembled the *gutta-percha* now in common use. This caoutchouc was occasionally called Indian rubber or rubber of twist, and was no doubt one of the numerous *fungi*. Never tell me again that I am not at heart an antiquarian.

Talking of drag-ropes—our own, it seems, has this moment knocked a man overboard from one of the small magnetic propellers that swarm in ocean below us—a boat of about six thousand tons, and, from all accounts, shamefully crowded. These diminutive barques should be prohibited from carrying more than a

definite number of passengers. The man, of course, was not permitted to get on board again, and was soon out of sight, he and his life-preserver. I rejoice, my dear friend, that we live in an age so enlightened that no such a thing as an individual is supposed to exist. It is the mass for which the true Humanity cares. By the bye, talking of Humanity, do you know that our immortal Wiggins is not so original in his views of the Social Condition and so forth, as his contemporaries are inclined to suppose? Pundit assures me that the same ideas were put nearly in the same way, about a thousand years ago, by an Irish philosopher called Furrer, on account of his keeping a retail shop for cat peltries and other furs. Pundit *knows* you know; there can be no mistake about it. How very wonderfully do we see verified every day, the profound observation of the Hindoo Aries Tottle (as quoted by Pundit)—“Thus must we say that, not once or twice, or a few times, but with almost infinite repetitions, the same opinions came round in a circle among men.”

APRIL 2D.—Spoke to-day the magnetic cutter in charge of the middle section of floating telegraph wires. I learn that when this species of telegraph was first put into operation by Horse, it was considered quite impossible to convey the wires over sea, but now we are at a loss to comprehend where the difficulty lay! So wags the world. *Tempora mutantur*—excuse me for quoting the Etruscan. What *would* we do without the Atlantic telegraph? (Pundit says Atlantic was the ancient adjective.) We lay to a few minutes to ask the cutter some questions, and learned, among other glorious news, that civil war is raging in Africa, while the plague is doing its good work beautifully both in Yurope and Ayesher. Is it not truly remarkable that, before the magnificent light shed upon philosophy by Humanity, the world was accustomed to regard War and Pestilence as calamities? Do you know that prayers were actually offered up in the ancient temples to the end that these *evils* (1) might not be visited upon mankind? Is it not really difficult to comprehend upon what principle of interest our forefathers acted? Were they so blind as not to perceive that the destruction of a myriad of individuals is only so much positive advantage to the mass!

APRIL 3D.—It is really a very fine amusement to ascend the rope-ladder leading to the summit of the balloon-bag, and thence survey the surrounding world. From the car below you know the prospect is not so comprehensive—you can see little vertically.

But seated here (where I write this) in the luxuriously-cushioned open piazza of the summit, one can see everything that is going on in all directions. Just now there is quite a crowd of balloons in sight, and they present a very animated appearance, while the air is resonant with the hum of so many millions of human voices. I have heard it asserted that when Yellow or (Pundit *will* have it) Violet, who is supposed to have been the first aeronaut, maintained the practicability of traversing the atmosphere in all directions, by merely ascending or descending until a favorable current was attained, he was scarcely hearkened to at all by his contemporaries, who looked upon him as merely an ingenious sort of madman, because the philosophers (!) of the day declared the thing impossible. Really now it does seem to me *quite* unaccountable how anything so obviously feasible could have escaped the sagacity of the ancient *savans*. But in all ages the great obstacles to advancement in Art have been opposed by the so-called men of science. To be sure, *our* men of science are not quite so bigoted as those of old:—oh, I have something *so* queer to tell you on this topic. Do you know that it is not more than a thousand years ago since the metaphysicians consented to relieve the people of the singular fancy that there existed but *two possible roads for the attainment of Truth!* Believe it if you can! It appears that long, long ago, in the night of Time, there lived a Turkish philosopher (or Hindoo possibly) called Aries Tottle. This person introduced, or at all events propagated what was termed the deductive or *à priori* mode of investigation. He started with what he maintained to be *axioms* or “self-evident truths,” and then proceeded “logically” to results. His greatest disciples were one Neuclyd, and one Cant. Well, Aries Tottle flourished supreme until the advent of one Hog, surnamed the “Ettrick Shepherd,” who preached an entirely different system, which he called the *à posteriori* or inductive. His plan referred altogether to Sensation. He proceeded by observing, analyzing, and classifying facts—*instantiæ naturæ*, as they were affectedly called—into general laws. Aries Tottle’s mode, in a word, was based on *noumena*; Hog’s on *phenomena*. Well, so great was the admiration excited by this latter system that, at its first introduction, Aries Tottle fell into disrepute; but finally he recovered ground and was permitted to divide the realm of Truth with his more modern rival. The *savans* now maintained the Aristotelian and *Baconian* roads were the sole possible avenues to knowledge.

"Baconian," you must know, was an adjective invented as equivalent to Hog-ian and more euphonious and dignified.

Now, my dear friend, I do assure you, most positively, that I represent this matter fairly, on the soundest authority; and you can easily understand how a notion so absurd on its very face must have operated to retard the progress of all true knowledge—which makes its advances almost invariably by intuitive bounds. The ancient idea confined investigations to *crawling*; and for hundreds of years so great was the infatuation about Hog especially, that a virtual end was put to all thinking, properly so called. No man dared utter a truth to which he felt himself indebted to his *Soul* alone. It mattered not whether the truth was even *demonstrably* a truth, for the bullet-headed *savans* of the time regarded only *the road* by which he had attained it. They would not even *look* at the end. "Let us see the means," they cried, "the means!" If, upon investigation of the means, it was found to come under neither the category Aries (that is to say Ram) nor under the category Hog, why then the savans went no further, but pronounced the "theorist" a fool, and would have nothing to do with him or his truth.

Now, it can not be maintained, even that by the crawling system the greatest amount of truth would be attained in any long series of ages, for the repression of *imagination* was an evil not to be compensated for by any superior *certainly* in the ancient modes of investigation. The error of these Jurmaines, these Vrinch, these Ingitch, and these Amriccans (the latter, by the way, were our own immediate progenitors), was an error quite analogous with that of the wiseacre who fancies that he must necessarily see an object the better the more closely he holds it to his eyes. These people blinded themselves by details. When they proceeded Hoggishly, their "facts" were by no means always facts—a matter of little consequence had it not been for assuming that they *were* facts and must be facts because they appeared to be such. When they proceeded on the path of the Ram, their course was scarcely as straight as a ram's horn, for they *never had* an axiom which was an axiom at all. They must have been very blind not to see this, even in their own day; for even in their own day many of the long "established" axioms had been rejected. For example—"Ex nihilo nihil fit;" "a body can not act where it is not;" "there can not exist antipodes;" "darkness can not come out of light"—all these, and a dozen other similar propositions, formerly admitted

without hesitation as axioms, were, even at the period of which I speak, seen to be untenable. How absurd in these people, then, to persist in putting faith in "axioms" as immutable bases of Truth! But even out of the mouths of their soundest reasons it is easy to demonstrate the futility, the impalpability of their axioms in general. Who *was* the soundest of their logicians? Let me see! I will go and ask Pundit and be back in a minute. . . . Ah, here we have it! Here is a book written nearly a thousand years ago and lately translated from the Inglistch—which, by the way, appears to have been the rudiment of the Amriccan. Pundit says it is decidedly the cleverest ancient work on its topic, Logic. The author (who was much thought of in his day) was one Miller, or Mill; and we find it recorded of him, as a point of some importance, that he had a mill-horse called Bentham. But let us glance at the treatise!

Ah!—"Ability or inability to conceive," says Mr. Mill, very properly, "is in no case to be received as a criterion of axiomatic truth." What *modern* in his senses would ever think of disputing this truism? The only wonder with us must be, how it happened that Mr. Mill conceived it necessary even to hint at anything so obvious. So far good—but let us turn over another paper. What have we here?—"Contradictories can not both be true—that is, can not coexist in nature." Here Mr. Mill means, for example, that a tree must be either a tree or not a tree—that it can not be at the same time a tree and not a tree. Very well; but I ask him *why*. His reply is this—and never pretends to be anything else than this—"Because it is impossible to conceive that contradictories can both be true." But this is no answer at all, by his own showing; for has he not just admitted as a truism that "ability or inability to conceive is *in no case* to be received as a criterion of axiomatic truth."

Now I do not complain of these ancients so much because their logic is, by their own showing, utterly baseless, worthless and fantastic altogether, as because of their pompous and imbecile proscription of all *other* roads of Truth, of all *other* means for its attainment than the two preposterous paths—the one of creeping and the one of crawling—to which they have dared to confine the Soul that loves nothing so well as to *soar*.

By the bye, my dear friend, do you not think it would have puzzled these ancient dogmaticians to have determined by *which* of their two roads it was that the most important and most sub-

lime of *all* their truths was, in effect, attained? I mean the truth of Gravitation. Newton owed it to Kepler. Kepler admitted that his three laws were *guessed at*—these three laws of all laws which led the great Inglicht mathematician to his principle, the basis of all physical principle—to go behind which we must enter the Kingdom of Metaphysics: Kepler guessed—that is to say, *imagined*. He was essentially a “theorist”—that word now of so much sanctity, formerly an epithet of contempt. Would it not have puzzled these old moles, too, to have explained by which of the two “roads” a cryptographist unriddles a cryptograph of more than usual secrecy, or by which of the two roads Champollion directed mankind to those enduring and almost innumerable truths which resulted from his deciphering the Hieroglyphics.

One word more on this topic and I will be done boring you. Is it not *passing* strange that, with their eternal prattling about *roads* to Truth, these bigoted people missed what we now so clearly perceive to be the great highway—that of Consistency? Does it not seem singular how they should have failed to deduce from the works of God the vital fact that a perfect consistency *must* be an absolute truth! How plain has been our progress since the late announcement of this proposition! Investigation has been taken out of the hands of the ground-moles and given, as a task, to the true and only true thinkers, the men of ardent imagination. These latter *theorize*. Can you not fancy the shout of scorn with which my words would be received by our progenitors were it possible for them to be now looking over my shoulder? These men, I say, *theorize*; and their theories are simply corrected, reduced, systematized—cleared, little by little, of their dross of inconsistency—until, finally, a perfect consistency stands apparent which even the most stolid admit, because it *is* a consistency, to be an absolute and an unquestionable *truth*.

APRIL 4TH.—The new gas is doing wonders, in conjunction with the new improvement with gutta percha. How very safe, commodious, manageable, and in every respect convenient are our modern balloons! Here is an immense one approaching us at the rate of at least a hundred and fifty miles an hour. It seems to be crowded with people—perhaps there are three or four hundred passengers—and yet it soars to an elevation of nearly a mile, looking down upon poor us with sovereign contempt. Still a hundred or even two hundred miles an hour is slow travelling after

all. Do you remember our flight on the railroad across the Kanadaw continent?—fully three hundred miles the hour—that was travelling. Nothing to be seen though—nothing to be done but flirt, feast and dance—in the magnificent saloons. Do you remember what an odd sensation was experienced when, by chance, we caught a glimpse of external objects while the cars were in full flight? Everything seemed unique—in one mass. For my part, I can not say but that I preferred the travelling by the slow train of a hundred miles the hour. Here we were permitted to have glass windows—even to have them open—and something like a distinct view of the country was attainable. . . . Pundit says that *the route* for the great Kanadaw railroad must have been in some measure marked out about nine hundred years ago! In fact, he goes so far as to assert that actual traces of a road are still discernible—traces referable to a period quite as remote as that mentioned. The track, it appears, was *double* only; ours, you know, has twelve paths; and three or four new ones are in preparation. The ancient rails are very slight, and placed so close together as to be, according to modern notions, quite frivolous, if not dangerous in the extreme. The present width of track—fifty feet—is considered, indeed, scarcely secure enough. For my part, I make no doubt that a track of some sort *must* have existed in very remote times, as Pundit asserts; for nothing can be clearer, to my mind, than that, at some period—not less than seven centuries ago, certainly—the Northern and Southern Kanadaw continents were *united*; the Kanawdians, then, would have been driven, by necessity, to a great railroad across the continent.

APRIL 5TH.—I am almost devoured by *ennui*. Pundit is the only conversable person on board; and he, poor soul can speak of nothing but antiquities. He has been occupied all the day in the attempt to convince me that the ancient Amriccans *governed themselves*!—did ever anybody hear of such an absurdity?—that they existed in a sort of every man-for-himself confederacy, after the fashion of the "prairie dogs" that we read of in fable. He says that they started with the queerest idea conceivable, viz.: that all men are born free and equal—this in the very teeth of the laws of *gradation* so visibly impressed upon all things both in the moral and physical universe. Every man "voted," as they called it—that is to say meddled with public affairs—until, at length, it was discovered that what is everybody's business is nobody's, and that

the "Republic" (so the absurd thing was called) was without a government at all. It is related, however, that the first circumstance which disturbed, very particularly, the self-complacency of the philosophers who constructed this "Republic," was the startling discovery that universal suffrage gave opportunity for fraudulent schemes, by means of which any desired number of votes might at any time be polled, without the possibility of prevention or even detection, by any party which should be merely villainous enough not to be ashamed of the fraud. A little reflection upon this discovery sufficed to render evident the consequences, which were that rascality *must* predominate—in a word, that a republican government *could* never be anything but a rascally one. While the philosophers, however, were busied in blushing at their stupidity in not having foreseen these inevitable evils, and intent upon the invention of new theories, the matter was put to an abrupt issue by a fellow of the name of *Mob*, who took everything into his own hands and set up a despotism, in comparison with which those of the fabulous Zeros and Hello-fagabaluses were respectable and delectable. This *Mob* (a foreigner, by the bye), is said to have been the most odious of all men that ever incumbered the earth. He was a giant in stature—insolent, rapacious, filthy; had the gall of a bullock, with the heart of a hyena and the brains of a peacock. He died, at length, by dint of his own energies, which exhausted him. Nevertheless, he had his uses, as everything has, however vile, and taught mankind a lesson which to this day it is in no danger of forgetting—never to run directly contrary to the natural analogies. As for Republicanism, no analogy could be found for it upon the face of the earth—unless we except the case of the "prairie dogs," an exception which seems to demonstrate, if anything, that democracy is a very admirable form of government—for dogs.

APRIL 6TH.—Last night had a fine view of Alpha Lyrae, whose disk, through our captain's spy-glass, subtends an angle of half a degree, looking very much as our sun does to the naked eye on a misty day. Alpha Lyrae, although so *very* much larger than our sun, by the bye, resembles him closely as regards its spots, its atmosphere, and in many other particulars. It is only within the last century, Pundit tells me, that the binary relation existing between these two orbs began even to be suspected. The evident motion of our system in the heavens was (strange to say!) re-

ferred to an orbit about a prodigious star in the centre of the galaxy. About this star, or, at all events, about a centre of gravity common to all the globes of the Milky Way and supposed to be near Alcyone in the Pleiades, every one of these globes was declared to be revolving, our own performing the circuit in a period of 117,000,000 of years! We, with our present lights, our vast telescopic improvements, and so forth, of course find it difficult to comprehend *the ground* of an idea such as this. Its first propagator was one Mudler. He was led, we must presume, to this wild hypothesis by mere analogy in the first instance; but, this being the case, he should have at least adhered to analogy in its development. A great central orb *was*, in fact, suggested; so far Mudler was consistent. This central orb, however, dynamically, should have been greater than all its surrounding orbs taken together. The question might then have been asked—"Why do we not see it?"—*we*, especially, who occupy the mid region of the cluster—the very locality *near* which, at least, must be situated this inconceivable central sun. The astronomer, perhaps, at this point, took refuge in the suggestion of non-luminosity; and here analogy was suddenly let fall. But even admitting the central orb non-luminous, how did he manage to explain its failure to be rendered visible by the incalculable host of glorious suns glaring in all directions about it? No doubt what he finally maintained was merely a centre of gravity common to all the revolving orbs—but here again analogy must have been let fall. Our system revolves, it is true, about a common centre of gravity, but it does this in connection with and in consequence of a material sun whose mass more than counterbalances the rest of the system. The mathematical circle is a curve composed of an infinity of straight lines; but this idea of the circle—this idea of it which, in regard to all earthly geometry, we consider as merely the mathematical, in contradistinction from the practical, idea—is, in sober fact, the *practical* conception which alone we have any right to entertain in respect to those Titanic circles with which we have to deal, at least in fancy, when we suppose our system, with its fellows, revolving about a point in the centre of the galaxy. Let the most vigorous of human imaginations but attempt to take a single step toward the comprehension of a circuit so unutterable! It would scarcely be paradoxical to say that a flash of lightning itself, travelling *forever* upon the circumference of this inconceiv-

able circle, would still *forever* be travelling in a straight line. That the path of our sun along such a circumference—that the direction of our system in such an orbit—would, to any human perception, deviate in the slightest degree from a straight line even in a million of years, is a proposition not to be entertained; and yet these ancient astronomers were absolutely cajoled, it appears, into believing that a decisive curvature had become apparent during the brief period of their astronomical history—during the mere point—during the utter nothingness of two or three thousand years! How incomprehensible, that considerations such as this did not at once indicate to them the true state of affairs—that of the binary revolution of our sun and Alpha Lyræ around a common centre of gravity!

APRIL 7TH.—Continued last night our astronomical amusements. Had a fine view of the five Neptunian asteroids, and watched with much interest the putting up of a huge impost on a couple of lintels in the new temple at Daphnis in the moon. It was amusing to think that creatures so diminutive as the lunar-ians, and bearing so little resemblance to humanity, yet evinced a mechanical ingenuity so much superior to our own. One finds it difficult, too, to conceive the vast masses which these people handle so easily, to be as light as our own reason tells us they actually are.

APRIL 8TH.—Eureka! Pundit is in his glory. A balloon from Kanadaw spoke us to-day and threw on board several late papers; they contain some exceedingly curious information relative to Kanawdian or rather Amriccan antiquities. You know, I presume, that laborers have for some months been employed in preparing the ground for a new fountain at Paradise, the Emperor's principal pleasure garden. Paradise, it appears, has been, *literally* speaking, an island time out of mind—that is to say, its northern boundary was always (as far back as any record extends) a rivulet, or rather a very narrow arm of the sea. This arm was gradually widened until it attained its present breadth—a mile. The whole length of the island is nine miles; the breadth varies materially. The entire area (so Pundit says) was, about eight hundred years ago, densely packed with houses, some of them twenty stories high: land (for some most unaccountable reason) being considered as especially precious just in this vicinity. The disastrous earthquake, however, of the year 2050, so totally uprooted

and overwhelmed the town (for it was almost too large to be called a village) that the most indefatigable of our antiquarians have never yet been able to obtain from the site any sufficient data (in the shape of coins, medals or inscriptions) wherewith to build up even the ghost of a theory concerning the manners, customs, etc., etc., of the aboriginal inhabitants. Nearly all that we have hitherto known of them is, that they were a portion of the Knickerbocker tribe of savages infesting the continent at its first discovery by Recorder Riker, a knight of the Golden Fleece. They were by no means uncivilized, however, but cultivated various arts and even sciences after a fashion of their own. It is related of them that they were acute in many respects, but were oddly afflicted with monomania for building what, in the ancient Amriccan, was denominated "churches"—a kind of pagoda instituted for the worship of two idols that went by the names of Wealth and Fashion. In the end, it is said, the island became, nine-tenths of it, church. The women, too, it appears, were oddly deformed by a natural protuberance of the region just below the small of the back—although, most unaccountably, this deformity was looked upon altogether in the light of a beauty. One or two pictures of these singular women have, in fact, been miraculously preserved. They look very odd, *very*—like something between a turkey-cock and a dromedary.

Well, these few details are nearly all that have descended to us respecting the ancient Knickerbockers. It seems, however, that while digging in the centre of the emperor's garden (which, you know, covers the whole island), some of the workmen unearthed a cubical and evidently chiselled block of granite, weighing several hundred pounds. It was in good preservation, having received, apparently, little injury from the convulsion which entombed it. On one of its surfaces was a marble slab with (only think of it!) *an inscription—a legible inscription*. Pundit is in ecstasies. Upon detaching the slab, a cavity appeared, containing a leaden box filled with various coins, a long scroll of names, several documents which appear to resemble newspapers, with other matters of intense interest to the antiquarian! There can be no doubt that all these are genuine Amriccan relics belonging to the tribe called Knickerbocker. The papers thrown on board our balloon are filled with fac-similes of the coins, MSS., typography,

etc., etc. I copy for your amusement the Knickerbocker inscription on the marble slab:—

This Corner Stone of a Monument to the
Memory of
GEORGE WASHINGTON,
was laid with appropriate ceremonies on the
19TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1847,
the anniversary of the surrender of
Lord Cornwallis
to General Washington at Yorktown,
A.D. 1781,
under the auspices of the
Washington Monument Association of the
city of New York.

This, as I give it, is a verbatim translation done by Pundit himself, so there *can* be no mistake about it. From the few words thus preserved, we gleam several important items of knowledge, not the least interesting of which is the fact that a thousand years ago *actual* monuments had fallen into disuse—as was all very proper—the people contenting themselves, as we do now, with a mere indication of the design to erect a monument at some future time; a corner-stone being cautiously laid by itself “solitary and alone” (excuse me for quoting the great Amriccan poet Benton!), as a guarantee of the magnanimous *intention*. We ascertain, too, very distinctly, from this admirable inscription, the how as well as the where and the what, of the great surrender in question. As to the *where*, it was Yorktown (wherever that was), and as to the *what*, it was General Cornwallis (no doubt some wealthy dealer in corn). *He* was surrendered. The inscription commemorates the surrender of—what?—why, “of Lord Cornwallis.” The only question is what could the savages wish him surrendered for. But when we remember that these savages were undoubtedly cannibals, we are led to the conclusion that they intended him for sausage. As to the *how* of the surrender, no language can be more explicit. Lord Cornwallis was surrendered (for sausage) “under the auspices of the Washington Monument Association”—no doubt a charitable institution for the depositing of corner-stones.—But, Heaven bless mel what is the matter? Ah, I see—the balloon has collapsed, and we shall have a tumble into the sea. I

have, therefore, only time enough to add that, from a hasty inspection of the fac-similes of newspapers, etc., etc., I find that *the* great men in those days among the Amriccans, were one John, a Smith, and one Zacchary, a tailor.

Good-by, until I see you again. Whether you ever get this letter or not is point of little importance, as I write altogether for my own amusement. I shall cork the MS. up in a bottle, however, and throw it into the sea.

Yours everlastingly,

Pundita.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was one of the truly great writers of the 19th century. Like Edgar Allan Poe, Fitz-James O'Brien and other outstanding contemporaries Hawthorne was influenced by a curious blend of the gothic and the impact of scientific technology. "Rappaccini's Daughter," published in 1846, is one of the most imaginative stories in American literature; Mark Van Doren felt "this is one of Hawthorne's greatest tales." It was originally intended by Hawthorne as the basis for a novel.

Rappaccini's Daughter

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

A young man named Giovanni Guasconti came very long ago from the more southern region of Italy to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his *Inferno*. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heartbreak natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

"Holy Virgin, signor!" cried old Dame Lisabetta, who, won by the youth's remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavoring to give the chamber a habitable air; "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man's heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the

window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples."

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Lombard sunshine was as cheerful as that of Southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window, and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven forbid, signor, unless it were fruitful of better pot-herbs than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he distils these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the Signor Doctor at work and perchance the signora his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber, and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy, or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain in the centre, sculptured with rare art, but so wofully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window and made him feel as if a fountain were an immortal spirit that sung its song unceasingly, and without heeding the vicissitudes around it, while one century embodied it in marble and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided grew various plants that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and in some instances flowers of gorgeous magnificence. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the

lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care, as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fosters them. Some were placed in urns rich with old carving and others in common garden-pots; some crept serpent-like along the ground, or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow and sickly-looking man dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, and a thin gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path; it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of the deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch or the direct inhaling of their odors with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably; for the man's demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts or deadly snakes or evil spirits which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden—that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world? and this man with such a

perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow—was he the Adam?

The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice. But, finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease:

"Beatrice! Beatrice!"

"Here am I, my father! What would you?" cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house—a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson and of perfumes heavily delectable. "Are you in the garden?"

"Yes, Beatrice," answered the gardener, "and I need your help."

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely in their luxuriance by her virgin zone. Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown morbid while he looked down into the garden, for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they—more beautiful than the richest of them—but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden path it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants which her father had most sedulously avoided.

"Here, Beatrice," said the latter; "see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned to your sole charge."

"And gladly will I undertake it," cried again the rich tones of

the young lady as she bent toward the magnificent plant and opened her arms as if to embrace it. "Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse and serve thee, and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfume-breath, which to her is as the breath of life."

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes, and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower or one sister performing the duties of affection to another.

The scene soon terminated. Whether Doctor Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants and steal upward past the open window, and Giovanni, closing the lattice, went to his couch and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement on starting from sleep was to throw open the window and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised, and a little ashamed, to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be in the first rays of the sun, which gilded the dewdrops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced that in the heart of the barren city he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation. It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language to keep him in communion with Nature. Neither the sickly and thought-worn Doctor Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, was now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both was due to their own qualities, and how much to his wonder-working fancy. But he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter.

In the course of the day he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the university, a physician of eminent repute to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature and habits that might almost be called jovial; he kept the young man to dinner and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Doctor Rappaccini. But the professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

"It would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine," said Professor Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, "to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini. But, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Doctor Rappaccini has as much science as any member of the faculty—with perhaps one single exception—in Padua or all Italy, but there are certain grave objections to his professional character."

"And what are they?" asked the young man.

"Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?" said the professor, with a smile. "But, as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life—his own among the rest—or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard-seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge."

"Methinks he is an awful man indeed," remarked Guasconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. "And yet, worshipful professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?"

"God forbid!" answered the professor somewhat testily—"at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory that all medicinal virtues

are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world with. That the Signor Doctor does less mischief than might be expected with such dangerous substances is undeniable. Now and then, it must be owned, he has effected—or seemed to effect—a marvelous cure. But, to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success—they being probably the work of chance—but should be held strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work.”

The youth might have taken Baglioni’s opinions with many grains of allowance had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Doctor Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

“I know not, most learned professor,” returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini’s exclusive zeal for science—“I know not how dearly this physician may love his art, but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter.”

“Aha!” cried the professor, with a laugh. “So now our friend Giovanni’s secret is out! You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor’s chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine. Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of *Lacryma*.”

Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Doctor Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist’s, he bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that

he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowledgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air and gleamed back again out of the depths of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however, as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case, a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their various perfumes as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable that lived upon sweet odors. On again beholding Beatrice the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it—so brilliant, so vivid in its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness—qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe or imagine an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gem-like flowers over the fountain—a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub she threw open her arms as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace—so intimate that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

"Give me thy breath, my sister," exclaimed Beatrice, "for I am faint with common air. And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem, and place it close beside my heart."

With these words the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's drafts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange-colored reptile of the lizard or chameleon species

chanced to be creeping along the path just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni, but at the distance from which he gazed he could scarcely have seen anything so minute—it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon and crossed herself sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

"Am I awake? Have I my senses?" said he to himself. "What is this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or inexpressibly terrible?"

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window; so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall; it had perhaps wandered through the city and found no flowers nor verdure among those antique haunts of men until the heavy perfumes of Doctor Rappaccini's shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now, here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti's eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight it grew faint and fell at her feet. Its bright wings shivered; it was dead—from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man—rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features and a glistening of gold among his ringlets—gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in midair. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

"Signora," said he, "there are pure and healthful flowers: wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti."

"Thanks, signor!" replied Beatrice, with her rich voice, that came forth as it were like a gush of music, and with a mirthful expression, half childish and half woman-like. "I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but if I toss it into the air, it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then, as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But, few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni, when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought: there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance.

For many days after this incident the young man avoided the window that looked into Doctor Rappaccini's garden as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eyesight had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings, and Padua itself, at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself as far as possible to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice, thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, should Giovanni have remained so near this extraordinary being that the proximity, and possibility even of intercourse, should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti had not a deep heart—or, at all events, its depths were not sounded now—but he had a quick fancy and an ardent southern temperament which rose every instant to a higher fever-pitch. Whether or no Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes—that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers—which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a

madness to him, nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame, but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua or beyond its gates; his footsteps kept time with the throbbings of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day he found himself arrested; his arm was seized by a portly personage who had turned back on recognizing the young man and expended much breath in overtaking him.

"Signor Giovannil Stay, my young friend!" cried he. "Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case if I were as much altered as yourself."

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided ever since their first meeting, from a doubt that the professor's sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one, and spoke like a man in a dream:

"Yes; I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass."

"Not yet—not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the professor, smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. "What! Did I grow up side by side with your father, and shall his son pass me like a stranger in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni, for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Speedily, then, most worshipful professor—speedily!" said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. "Does not Your Worship see that I am in haste?"

Now, while he was speaking, there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly like a person in inferior health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect that an observer might have easily overlooked the

merely physical attributes, and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human, interest in the young man.

"It is Doctor Rappaccini," whispered the professor, when the stranger had passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

"He *has* seen you! he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, hastily. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his: it is the same that coldly illuminates his face as he bends over a bird, a mouse or a butterfly which in pursuance of some experiment he has killed by the perfume of a flower—a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature's warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments."

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni, passionately.

"That, Signor Professor, were an untoward experiment."

"Patience, patience!" replied the imperturbable professor. "I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands. And the Signora Beatrice—what part does she act in this mystery?"

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni's pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently, and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!"

Meanwhile, Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled and was evidently desirous to attract his attention—vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily sub-

sided into a cold and dull vacuity. He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore, laid her grasp upon his cloak.

"Signor, signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by centuries. "Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life. "A private entrance into Doctor Rappaccini's garden?"

"Hush, hush! Not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. "Yes, into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be admitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baglioni, crossed his mind that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the professor seemed to suppose that Doctor Rappaccini was involving him. But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him. The instant he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so. It mattered not whether she were angel or demon; he was irrevocably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward in ever lessening circles toward a result which he did not attempt to fore-shadow. And yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory, whether it were really of so deep and positive a nature as to justify him in now thrusting himself into an incalculable position, whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain only slightly or not at all connected with his heart.

He paused, hesitated, turned half about, but again went on. His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves with the broken sunshine glimmering among them. Giovanni stepped forth, and, forcing himself through the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its

tendrils over the hidden entrance, he stood beneath his own window, in the open area of Doctor Rappaccini's garden.

How often is it the case that when impossibilities have come to pass, and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance. So was it now with Giovanni. Day after day his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her face to face in this very garden, basking in the Oriental sunshine of her beauty and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence. But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants.

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him: their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer straying by himself through a forest would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several, also, would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness, indicating that there had been such a commixture, and, as it were, adultery of various vegetable species that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which in one or two cases had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden. In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and turning beheld Beatrice emerging from beneath the sculptured portal.

Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment—whether he should apologize for his intrusion into

the garden or assume that he was there with the privy at least, if not by the desire, of Doctor Rappaccini or his daughter. But Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path, and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, signor," said Beatrice, with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window; "it is no marvel, therefore, if the sight of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs, for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady?" observed Giovanni. "If fame says true, you likewise are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms and these spicy perfumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than under Signor Rappaccini himself."

"Are there such idle rumors?" asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers I know no more of them than their hues and perfume, and sometimes methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here—and those not the least brilliant—that shock and offend me when they meet my eye. But pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science; believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes."

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" asked Giovanni, pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink. "No, signora; you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him. There came a deep flush to her cheek, but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queenlike haughtiness:

"I do so bid you, signor," she replied. "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me; if true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice

Rappaccini's lips are true from the heart outward; those you may believe."

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect and beamed upon Giovanni's consciousness like the light of truth itself. But while she spoke there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her, rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs. It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice's breath which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart. A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni, and flitted away; he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear.

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice's manner vanished; she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth, not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother and his sisters—questions indicating such seclusion and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms that Giovanni responded as if to an infant. Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight and wondering at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom. There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gemlike brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon there gleamed across the young man's mind a sense of wonder that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination, whom he had idealized in such hues of terror, in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes—that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother, and should find her so human and so maiden-like. But such reflections were only momentary; the effect of her character was too real not to make itself familiar at once.

In this free intercourse they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the

shattered fountain beside which grew the magnificent shrub with its treasury of glowing blossoms. A fragrance was diffused from it which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom, as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully.

"For the first time in my life," murmured she. Addressing the shrub, "I had forgotten thee."

"I remember, signora," said Giovanni, "that you once promised to reward me with one of those living gems for the bouquet which I had the happy boldness to fling to your feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview."

He made a step toward the shrub with extended hand. But Beatrice darted forward uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibres.

"Touch it not," exclaimed she, in a voice of agony—"not for thy life! It is fatal."

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him and vanished beneath the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Doctor Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings invested with all the witchery that had been gathering around it ever since his first glimpse of her, and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human; her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshiped; she was capable, surely, on her part of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system were now either forgotten or by the subtle sophistry of passion transmitted into a golden crown of enchantment; rendering Beatrice the more admirable by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half-ideas which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness.

Thus did Giovanni spend the night, nor fell asleep until the

dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Doctor Rappaccini's garden, whither his dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season, and flinging his beams upon the young man's eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain. When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in his hand, in his right hand—the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own when he was on the point of plucking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple print like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist. Oh, how stubbornly does love, or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart—how stubbornly does it hold its faith until the moment comes when it is doomed to vanish into the mist! Giovanni wrapped a handkerchief about his hand, and wondered what evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate. A third, a fourth, and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an incident in Giovanni's daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live, for the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance, and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been playmates from early infancy—as if they were such playmates still. If by any unwonted chance he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window and sent up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber and echo and reverberate throughout his heart. "Giovanni, Giovanni! Why tarriest thou? Come down!" and down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But with all this intimate familiarity there was still a reserve in Beatrice's demeanor so rigidly and invariably sustained that the idea of infringing it scarcely occurred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs they loved—they had looked love with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way; they had even spoken love in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated breath like tongues of long-hidden flame—and yet there had been no seal of lips, no clasp of hands, nor any slightest caress such as love claims and

hallows. He had never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a breeze. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and, withal, wore such a look of desolate separation shuddering at itself that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At such times he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose monster-like out of the caverns of his heart and stared him in the face. His love grew thin and faint as the morning mist; his doubts alone had substance. But when Beatrice's face brightened again after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the mysterious, questionable being whom he had watched with so much awe and horror; she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl whom he felt that his spirit knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up, as he had long been, to a pervading excitement, he could tolerate no companions except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling; such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly for a few moments about the gossip of the city and the university, and then took up another topic.

"I have been reading an old classic author lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an Indian prince who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn and gorgeous as the sunset, but what especially distinguished her was a certain rich perfume in her breath richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger. But a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her."

"And what was that?" asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the professor.

"That this lovely woman," continued Baglioni, with emphasis, "had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until

her whole nature was so imbued with them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison—her embrace, death. Is not this a marvelous tale?"

"A childish fable," answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. "I marvel how Your Worship finds time to read such nonsense among your graver studies."

"By and bye," said the professor, looking uneasily about him, "what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious, and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, methinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower, but I see no flowers in the chamber."

"Nor are there any," replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the professor spoke; "nor, I think, is there any fragrance except in Your Worship's imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume—the bare idea of it—may easily be mistaken for a present reality."

"Ay, but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks," said Baglioni; "and were I to fancy any kind of odor, it would be that of some vile apothecary-drug, wherewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with drafts as sweet as a maiden's breath, but woe to him that sips them!"

Giovanni's face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul, and yet the intimation of a view of her character opposite to his own gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them, and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover's perfect faith.

"Signor Professor," said he, "you were my father's friend; perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part toward his son. I would fain feel nothing toward you save respect and deference, but I pray you to observe, signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice; you can not, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I

may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word.”

“Giovanni! my poor Giovanni!” answered the professor, with a calm expression of pity. “I know this wretched girl far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini and his poisonous daughter—yes, poisonous as she is beautiful. Listen, for even should you do violence to my gray hairs it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini and in the person of the lovely Beatrice.”

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

“Her father,” continued Baglioni, “was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child in this horrible manner as the victim of his insane zeal for science. For—let us do him justice—he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt, you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the results is to be death—perhaps a fate more awful still. Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing.”

“It is a dream!” muttered Giovanni to himself. “Surely it is a dream!”

“But,” resumed the professor, “be of good cheer, son of my friend! It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature from which her father’s madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase; it was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love-gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous; doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase and the precious liquid within it on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result.”

Baglioni laid a small exquisitely-wrought silver phial on the table and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effects upon the young man’s mind.

“We will thwart Rappaccini yet,” thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs. “But let us confess the truth of him: he is a wonderful man—a wonderful man indeed—a vile empiric, however, in his practise, and therefore not to be toler-

ated by those who respect the good old rules of the medical profession."

Throughout Giovanni's whole acquaintance with Beatrice he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character; yet so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate and guileless creature that the image now held up by Professor Baglioni looked as strange and incredible as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with his first glimpses of the beautiful girl: he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger. On such better evidence had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But now his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down groveling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of Beatrice's image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him once for all whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers; but if he could witness at the distance of a few paces the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea he hastened to the florist's and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dewdrops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror—a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to

himself that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life.

"At least," thought he, "her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower, to perish in her grasp."

With that thought he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame on perceiving that those dewy flowers were already beginning to droop; they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni's remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber: it must have been the poison in his breath. Then he shuddered—shuddered at himself. Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch with curious eye a spider that was busily at work hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and recrossing the artful system of interwoven lines, as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent toward the insect and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil; the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artisan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart; he knew not whether he were wicked or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive grip with his limbs, and hung dead across the window.

"Accursed! accursed!" muttered Giovanni, addressing himself. "Hast thou grown so poisonous that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?"

At that moment a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden:

"Giovanni, Giovanni! It is past the hour. Why tarriest thou? Come down!"

"Yes," muttered Giovanni, again: "she is the only being whom my breath may not slay. Would that it might!"

He rushed down, and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance, but with her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off—recollections of the delicate and benign power

of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate out-gush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni's rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain, and to its pool of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gemlike blossoms. Giovanni was affrighted at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

"Beatrice," asked he, abruptly, "whence came this shrub?"

"My father created it," answered she, with simplicity.

"Created it! created it!" repeated Giovanni. "What mean you, Beatrice?"

"He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of nature," replied Beatrice, "and at the hour when I first drew breath this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not," continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub; "it has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni—I grew up and blossomed with the plant, and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human affection; for—alas! hast thou not suspected it?—there was an awful doom."

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

"There was an awful doom," she continued—"the effect of my father's fatal love of science—which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, oh, how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!"

"Was it a hard doom?" asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Only of late have I known how hard it was," answered she, tenderly. "Oh, yes; but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet."

Giovanni's rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning-flash out of a dark cloud.

"Accursed one!" cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. "And, finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!"

"Giovanni!" exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunderstruck.

"Yes, poisonous thing!" repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. "Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world's wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now—if our breath be, happily, as fatal to ourselves as to all others—let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die."

"What has befallen me?" murmured Beatrice, with a low moan out of her heart. "Holy Virgin, pity me—a poor heartbroken child!"

"Thou? Dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers as they come from thy lips taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes, let us pray! Let us to church and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal: they that come after us will perish as by a pestilence. Let us sign crosses in the air: it will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols."

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me, but thou—what hast thou to do save with one other shudder at my hideous misery to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! This power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini!"

There was a swarm of summer insects flitting through the air in search of the food promised by the flower-odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni's head, and were evidently

attracted toward him by the same influence which had drawn them for an instant within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice, as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father's fatal science! No, no, Giovanni, it was not I! Never, never! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart. For, Giovanni—believe it—though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature and craves love as its daily food. But my father! he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes, spurn me! tread upon me! kill me! Oh, what is death, after such words as thine? But it was not I; not for a world of bliss would I have done it!"

Giovanni's passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his lips. There now came across him a sense—mournful and not without tenderness—of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice—the redeemed Beatrice—by the hand? Oh, weak and selfish and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words! No, no! there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily with that broken heart across the borders; she must bathe her hurts in some font of Paradise and forget her grief in the light of immortality, and there be well.

But Giovanni did not know it.

"Dear Beatrice," said he, approaching her, while she shrank away, as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse—"dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! There is a medicine, potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?"

"Give it me," said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver phial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added with a peculiar emphasis, "I will drink, but do thou await the result."

She put Baglioni's antidote to her lips, and at the same moment the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portal and came slowly toward the marble fountain. As he drew near the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or a group of statuary, and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused; his bent form grew erect with conscious power; he spread out his hands over them in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children. But those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives! Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered very nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

"My daughter," said Rappaccini, "thou art no longer lonely in the world. Pluck one of these precious gems from thy sister-shrub, and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, at thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, though the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides."

"My father," said Beatrice, feebly—and still, as she spoke, she kept her hand upon her heart—"wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?"

"Miserable!" exclaimed Rappaccini. "What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy, misery to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath, misery to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?"

"I would fain have been loved, not feared," murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. "But now it matters not. I am going, father, where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream—like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart, but they too will fall away

as I ascend. Oh, was there not from the first more poison in thy nature than in mine?"

To Beatrice—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death. And thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there at the feet of her father and Giovanni.

Just at that moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunder-stricken man of science:

"Rappaccini, Rappaccini! And is *this* the upshot of your experiment?"

Emile Erckmann (1822-1899) and Alexandre Chatrian (1826-1890) maintained one of the most successful literary collaborations. Begun in 1847, with Erckmann doing most of the writing and Chatrian handling the editing and business affairs, the name Erckmann-Chatrian was among the most popular for novels and plays in the 19th century. The pair wrote a number of excellent science-fiction short stories, some of which are included in the collections, *The Polish Jew* (1872) and *Strange Stories* (1880). The plot of "Hans Schnap's Spy-Glass," which appears in the former collection, is believed by some to have strongly influenced the modern master of science fiction, Stanley G. Weinbaum, in the writing of *The Point of View*.

Hans Schnap's Spy-Glass

BY ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

At one time I knew, at Mayence, a worthy apothecary named Hans Schnaps. The door of his shop opened on to the Thiermack, and was surmounted by a signboard, the panels of which are ornamented with the caduceus of Mercury and the serpentaria of Esculapius. As to Hans Schnaps himself, instead of attending to his business, he strolled about the streets, carrying a big spy-glass under his arm, and leaving his drugs to the care of a couple of youths in his employ.

He was a singular personage, with a long nose, grey eyes, and mocking lips. From the look of his wide-brimmed felt hat, his great coat of reddish drugget, and his beard trimmed into a point, you might have taken him for a Flemish painter.

I sometimes met him at the tavern of the Pot de Tabac, on the Zeil, where we played together a game of youcker, or chatted about the weather. Schnaps never felt called on to give me any information on the subject of his occupations, and I saw no necessity for enlightening him on the subject of mine; it was, in fact, a matter of little or no importance to either.

One day, Burgomaster Zacharias said to me—"Doctor Bénédum, you associate with a certain Hans Schnaps."

"Quite true, burgomaster; we meet pretty frequently."

"That Schnaps is a madman."

"I have never noticed it."

"Nothing is more positive; instead of attending to his business, he goes gadding about, with a spy-glass under his arm, stopping here and there; in short, losing his time and his customers."

"That is his affair, burgomaster; what would you have me do in it?"

"But he makes his wife unhappy," urged the burgomaster.

"What! is he married?"

"Yes, to the daughter of a cloth merchant, a very worthy and well-to-do man."

"So much the better; Schnaps will come in for some of his father-in-law's money."

"Yes; but he'll soon see the end of it."

"With his spy-glass?"

"No; but with his experiments. Imagine, doctor—he has established himself in his cellar, and what he does there the deuce only knows. If, by chance, you cast a glance through the grating, you find his spy-glass levelled at you; Schnaps eyes you with a roar of laughter—and when noon comes, his wife is always obliged to call out to him at least four times, 'Hans! Hans! the soup is ready!'"

"Poor woman, she is very much to be pitied!"

The burgomaster suspected that I was making fun of him, but he pretended not to see it, and proposed that we should share a pot of beer together. I accepted his invitation, and we talked of other matters.

These odd revelations, however, puzzled me not a little. What was Schnaps about in his cellar? What was the meaning of the spy-glass levelled at the grating? Was it a joke, or really some serious experiment? All this kept running in my head, and, a few days later, I went to the shop for the express purpose of finding out what I could. It was about nine o'clock. Madame Schnaps, a dry, nervous little woman, with dull eyes, features generally insignificant and ill put together, and cap set awry upon her head—one of those beings who, without speaking a word, contrive to suggest the idea that they are victims—Madame Schnaps received me behind the counter.

"Dear madame," I said to her, bowing graciously, with lifted

hat—"dear madame, where can I find your husband, Monsieur Schnaps?"

"In the cellar," she answered, with a grim smile.

"Already!"

The excellent creature appeared charmed by my manner, and raising her eyes directed me to a door on the left.

I hastened along the passage, and succeeded, after a good deal of stumbling on the dark stairs, in reaching the stone-paved floor of the laboratory.

It was really a cellar, but high, wide, spacious, and perfectly dry; filled with gigantic telescopes, mirrors of all kinds—flat, spherical, parabolical—prisms, crystals, and lenses, mounted on tripod stands—in short, the whole apparatus of an optician.

Hans Schnaps turned in surprise on hearing me descending.

"Hal! hal! hal!" he cried, "it's you, Dr. Bénédum! Glad to see you."

He came towards me with open arms. But, stretching forth my hand with a tragic gesture—

"Halt! halt!" I cried; "stop a moment before we indulge in familiarities! I come on behalf of the burgomaster to feel your pulse!"

He gravely held out his arm to me; I placed my thumb on the artery, and, speaking in a thoughtful tone and with pouted lip, I said—

"Aha! you are not so ill as they say."

"Ill!" he cried.

"No; you are not yet wholly out of your wits."

These words sent him off into such fits of laughter that Madame Schnaps leaned over the stairs, and peered down into the cellar with wondering eyes.

"Sophia! Sophia!" cried the apothecary, "hal! hal! hal! Do you know what they say of me? Hal! hal! hal! They say I am out of my wits!"

His wife made a grimace, and hurried away without answering.

Becoming a little more calm, Hans Schnaps said to me—

"Take a seat, Dr. Bénédum, and tell me what has procured me the honour of this visit?"

He placed an arm-chair for me, and seated himself on the box of a daguerreotype apparatus, his long grasshopper legs sprawled

wide apart, his elbows on his knees, and his pointed beard drawn out between his bony fingers.

His was truly a strange physiognomy, seen by the dim light admitted by the cellar-grating, and the vague gleams that faded into shadow amid the thousand optical instruments added to the singularity of the scene.

I simply related to him the conversation I had had with the burgomaster, and Schnaps, far from growing angry, burst into new peals of laughter.

"What a fool that burgomaster is," he cried, "for whom I have just invented a new kind of syringe—a superb discovery, doctor! And—hal hal Observe that spy-glass; it's the famous Schnaps' syringe, unique of its kind! With this wonderful instrument I am able to accomplish what has never before been possible—to syringe the brains of idiots, imbeciles, *crétins*, and burgomasters generally! I pour into the body of the pump a decoction of Voltaire, Shakspeare, or Father Malebranche; I delicately introduced into your eye the small end of the instrument—I press, and, crack!—you are filled with good sense, poetry, or metaphysics!"

Here Hans Schnaps made such contortions, threw himself about so violently, alternately plunging and drawing up his legs, that I expected to see him tumble off his box; but, fortunately, he preserved his equilibrium.

"Ahal my dear friend," I said, "an excellent joke."

"Joke!—not the least in the world. You are much too sensible, Doctor Bénédictum, not to know that our opinions depend upon our point of view: a miserable beggar, without fire or shelter, covered with rags, and with only a dunghill to lie upon, sees things in a light very different from that in which a nabob looks on them; social order to him appears detestable, laws absurd."

"Doubtless, but——"

"But," interrupted Schnaps, "seat the fellow at a splendid table, in a beautiful house, surround him with odoriferous flowers and pretty women, dress him in magnificent dresses, feed him on the daintiest dishes, let him drink Johannisberg, and place behind his chair a dozen lacqueys, who call him monseigneur, highness, most eminent, &c., he'll think that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds; social order will appear to him magnificent, and he will proclaim our laws masterpieces of human wisdom."

"Agreed, my dear Schnaps, agreed; what you now say is the

history of humanity; we all look at things through the great or small end of the spy-glass, as it may happen. But what the deuce are you driving at?"

"Ah!" cried the apothecary, "it's very simple. From the moment that all depends on our point of view, the question of happiness is reduced to always finding the point of view that is the most agreeable—and that is precisely the merit of my discovery. Judge for yourself."

He handed me his spy-glass; I applied it to my eye, and could not refrain from uttering a cry of admiration. I saw myself President of the Scientific Society of Berlin, plump, ruddy, and hearty, decorated with the Orders of Merit, of the Black Eagle, of the Brown Eagle, of the Red Eagle, of the Metidjé, of the Garter, and others besides. I held the bell, and called people to order. Through the windows of the amphitheatre I saw my two-horse calèche and my footman bedizened with lace. Further off, I saw my mistress, a *première danseuse*, captivated by my charms, walking under the lindens, a parasol in her hand—and I said to myself, "Bénédum! Bénédum!—fortunate being! sublime genius! great man!"

A burst of ironical laughter drew me from this profound contemplation. I put down the spy-glass and found myself in the cellar, opposite the apothecary, who was watching me, his little malicious eyes wrinkled up to his ears.

"Well, well," he said, "what do you think of that?"

"Oh, my dear Schnaps," I exclaimed, "let me have it!"

"A good joke!" he cried; "you forget that it cost me ten years' labour to make it. With this spy-glass the universe belongs to me, after a manner; I can see my wife, young, pretty, prepossessing; I am always gay, laughing, and contented. This spy-glass lifts me above the most powerful monarchs of the world; renders me richer than Cæsus, more omnipotent than Xerxes; I would not lose it for the world! That is not all: with this spy-glass I can give myself injected doses of good sense, poetry, or metaphysics, according to the requirements of my temperament."

"But, in the name of heaven, Schnaps," I replied, transported with enthusiasm, "how did you make this sublime discovery?"

"It is not so marvellous as you believe," he said, laughing; "it is nothing more nor less than a kaleidoscope, but a kaleidoscope of a new kind: instead of allowing flowers and bits of glass to fall at

hazard, it draws them together in a natural order. In other terms, it is a combination of the telescope and the daguerreotype, two instruments which Nature herself has united in our heads."

At this moment he took out of his pocket a small snuff-box, and slowly inhaled a pinch, as if to collect himself, and then continued—

"Three years ago I was trying to fix the solar spectrum on a copper-plate. To this end I employed chloride of silver, bitumen of Judea plunged in oil of lavender and petroleum, iodide of silver, bromide of lime, solid and fluid—in short, all imaginable chemical combinations, without obtaining any decisive result. One evening, under the influence of a more sensitive composition, red, orange, and violet light appeared to fix itself; the plate took, vaguely, the tints of the iris. I was forming the best opinion of it, when my dear spouse, according to her immemorial custom, cried out, 'Hans! the soup is getting cold! Hans! the soup is getting cold! Hans! Hans! Hans! Hans! the soup is getting cold! The soup is getting cold!' These cries rasped my nerves. Whether I would or not, I was obliged to interrupt my experiment. I placed the copper-plate on the jut of the wall you see over there, and which served me to stand a candle on; that done, I went upstairs and quietly seated myself at table."

"And what did you say to your wife?"

"Nothing."

"In your place, I should have wrung her neck."

The apothecary smiled silyly.

"That same night," he replied, "after supper, I went down again into the laboratory. Fatigue and weariness of mind forbade my continuing my labour; I sat down in that arm-chair and fell asleep. On awaking, at one o'clock in the morning, I saw that the candle had gone out; but the rays of a star broke through the grating, and reflected themselves on the metallic plate at the far end of the cellar. While my attention was fixed on this luminous spot, I was thinking of my wife; I felt impelled to correct her; a thousand little home discomforts passed through my head; but at length, tired of these reflections, I fell off to sleep again. The next day all was forgotten, till, happening to cast my eyes on the plate, I saw there—what?—my dream of the past night imprinted on it with striking truthfulness: my wife, the dining-room, the clock on the chimney, the windows at the back, the little yard beyond—

my household interior to the smallest details. Only fancy entered into the scene to a certain extent: I was administering sound correction to Madame Schnaps!

"Imagine my enthusiasm. I speedily conceived my spy-glass. I comprehended that the brain of man is like the eye of the fly, an optical instrument with a thousand facets; that whatever is reflected in it may come from it by refraction, and imprint itself upon a chemical substance, the secret of which I had discovered.

"Thus, dear doctor, all your passions, all your desires, all your thoughts, form themselves in this spy-glass. You improvise better by a look than by speech, you materialise instantaneously the intellectual world moving within your mind."

This discovery appeared to me miraculous.

"Master Schnaps—extraordinary man!" I cried, "suffer me to embrace you. Greater than the pyramid of Cheops, your memory will descend through the coming ages, and shine in the future like a star of the first magnitude. But I beg of you to enlighten me on one point. How can you inject doses of philosophy, or of any other science?"

"In this manner," replied Schnaps, highly flattered by my compliments—"but, first, allow me to place before you some general considerations of the highest interest. You may have remarked, Dr. Bénédum, that great philosophers, great mathematicians, great poets, and generally all great ideologists, end miserably. Scoffed at during their lives, dishonoured, despised, and sometimes even hunted like wild beasts, they become, after their death, the prey of a certain class of individuals known under the name of *practical men*. A great deal of beautiful sentiment has been written, during the last three thousand years, against this usage of genius by mediocrity; but that does not prevent things from going on, at the present time, exactly as they went on in the days of Homer, Pythagoras, Socrates, and many other celebrated ideologists—"they persecute, they kill them," safe to make for themselves reputations, and to coin money out of their discoveries! All this is passably melancholy and distressing, I admit, doctor; but at bottom nothing is more simple, and I will even say more natural. For an idea to succeed in this world, it must have the support of the masses. Now the masses, who don't know how to raise themselves to the light of the pure ideal, admirably understand the ideal materialised, that is to say, *fact*. This is the sole source of the pretended power of practical men over ideologists.

Those fellows are rich, powerful; they govern the world, statues are erected to them. Why?—because they put at the disposal of a number of ignoramuses the idea of some poor devil of a great man who died of hunger in a garret. Is that true, yes or no?"

"Perfectly true, Master Schnaps."

"Well," continued the apothecary, with an ironical smile, "my spy-glass will suppress the practical men and restore to the ideologists the superiority which is their due; it will materialise ideas, and put them in direct communication with the masses! Let us suppose, for example, that I wish to take an infusion of metaphysics; I apply my eye to the lens. You read Kant to me, and in the proportion and to the extent to which I hear you, and his reasoning enters my head, will it pass forth from my eyes, and print itself upon the prepared plate; it will materialise itself, take bodily form; I see it, it is real, positive; I can have no doubt of its existence, since it is recognised by my senses; and this result is obtained by my infusion."

While Schnaps was explaining to me this great mystery, a furious desire to possess the spy-glass seized on me.

"My dear friend," I said to him, "I hope you will make several of these spy-glasses. Such a discovery belongs to entire humanity."

"To humanity!" he cried; "I should like to know what humanity has done for me! It has treated me as a madman, it has compelled me to live with an insupportable wife, it would have left me to die of starvation, like so many other inventors, if I had not had the resource of selling it drugs."

"But you will obtain public consideration—universal esteem and admiration."

"What do I care for the admiration of a heap of idiots?" cried the apothecary. "Take away from them the discoveries of Gutenberg, Galileo, Newton, and Volta, and there would be nothing left but a troop of asses on their knees before a sword. The admiration of such people! No, no! Let humanity make spy-glasses for itself, I shall keep mine and use it for my own satisfaction."

I was indignant at such selfishness.

"Master Schnaps," I replied, repressing my anger, "permit me to tell you that your reasoning is absurd. You make sublime spy-glasses—very good; but others cultivate the land, sow, reap, grind the grain for us, and bring bread to our houses; others make

medicines, others clothes and shoes, others procure for us wine, beer, tobacco, none of which things you disdain. We are all bound one to the other, Master Schnaps; therefore——”

While I was developing this thesis, the apothecary looked at me through his spy-glass.

“Aha!” he cried, interrupting me, “I see what you want. You care very little for humanity. What you want is my spy-glass; but you shan’t have it. Ha! ha! ha!”

On this he shut it up like a spring-hat, placed it in a box, which he carefully locked, then, turning to me with a bantering air, said—

“You’ll not look through that any more. It will be a lesson to you, and teach you, for the future, not to play the hypocrite and preach the Gospel for your own profit. You’re a sly dog, Dr. Bénédum—a philanthropist! I don’t like people of that kind. Oblige me by taking yourself off the way you came.”

The blood mounted to my face. I felt a terribly strong desire to chastise Hans Schnaps, who watched me with a cunning expression in his eyes, and insolently pointed to the door; but I all at once recollected that the two boys in the shop above were a pair of thick-set fellows, and prudently retired.

Since then I removed from Mayence to come and live in Nuremberg, and for nearly two years have not seen Hans Schnaps. I think he still goes about the streets in his rusty coat, with his spy-glass under his arm; at least, so Burgomaster Zacharias recently told me in a letter, and I have no doubt of the fact.

What a pity that such a magnificent secret should be in the hands of such a fool!

A thing strange and worthy of remark is, that men of good sense have never invented anything; it is the madmen who, up to the present time, have made all the great discoveries.

The works of Herbert George Wells (1866-1946) probably represent the peak of literary achievement yet attained by any writer of science fiction. *The Time Machine*, in particular, has been acclaimed as a masterpiece since its appearance in 1895. It is not commonly known that Wells recast this story in many forms, both fiction and nonfiction, before he completed the final version. The very first casting of the story was called "The Chronic Argonauts" and was serialized in the April, May, and June, 1888, issues of *The Science Schools Journal*, a students' magazine at the Royal College of Science. He was then only twenty-two years old and "The Chronic Argonauts" was intended to be the first part of a novel. This is its first appearance in the United States.

The Chronic Argonauts

BY H. G. WELLS

The Story from an Esoteric Point of View

*Being the Account of Dr Nebogipfel's sojourn in
Llyddwdd*

About half-a-mile outside the village of Llyddwdd by the road that goes up over the eastern flank of the mountain called Pen-y-pwll to Rwtstog is a large farm-building known as the Manse. It derives this title from the fact that it was at one time the residence of the minister of the Calvinistic Methodists. It is a quaint, low, irregular erection, lying back some hundred yards from the roadway, and now fast passing into a ruinous state.

Since its construction in the latter half of the last century this house has undergone many changes of fortune, having been abandoned long since by the farmer of the surrounding acres for less pretentious and more commodious headquarters. Among others Miss Carnot, 'the Gallic Sappho' at one time made it her home, and later on an old man named Williams became its occupier. The foul murder of this tenant by his two sons was the

cause of its remaining for some considerable period uninhabited; with the inevitable consequence of its undergoing very extensive dilapidation.

The house had got a bad name, and adolescent man and Nature combined to bring swift desolation upon it. The fear of the Williamses which kept the Llyddwdd lads from gratifying their propensity to invade its deserted interior, manifested itself in unusually destructive resentment against its external breakables. The missiles with which they at once confessed and defied their spiritual dread, left scarcely a splinter of glass, and only battered relics of the old-fashioned leaden frames, in its narrow windows; while numberless shattered tiles about the house, and four or five black apertures yawning behind naked rafters in the roof, also witnessed vividly to the energy of their trajectory. Rain and wind thus had free way to enter the empty rooms and work their will there, old Time aiding and abetting. Alternately soaked and desiccated, the planks of flooring and wainscot warped apart strangely, split here and there, and tore themselves away in paroxysms of rheumatic pain from the rust-devoured nails that had once held them firm. The plaster of walls and ceiling, growing green-black with a rain-fed crust of lowly life, parted slowly from the fermenting laths; and large fragments thereof falling down inexplicably in tranquil hours, with loud concussion and clatter, gave strength to the popular superstition that old Williams and his sons were fated to re-enact their fearful tragedy until the final judgment. White roses and daedal creepers, that Miss Carnot had first adorned the walls with, spread now luxuriantly over the lichen-filmed tiles of the roof, and in slender graceful sprays timidly invaded the ghostly cobweb-draped apartments. Fungi, sickly pale, began to displace and uplift the bricks in the cellar floor; while on the rotting wood everywhere they clustered, in all the glory of purple and mottled crimson, yellow-brown and hepatic. Woodlice and ants, beetles and moths, winged and creeping things innumerable, found each day a more congenial home among the ruins; and after them in ever-increasing multitudes swarmed the blotchy toads. Swallows and martins built every year more thickly in the silent, airy, upper chambers. Bats and owls struggled for the crepuscular corners of the lower rooms. Thus, in the Spring of the year eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, was Nature taking over, gradually but certainly, the tenancy of the old Manse. 'The house was falling into decay,' as men

who do not appreciate the application of human derelics to other beings' use would say, 'surely and swiftly.' But it was destined nevertheless to shelter another human tenant before its final dissolution.

There was no intelligence of the advent of a new inhabitant in quiet Llyddwdd. He came without a solitary premonition out of the vast unknown into the sphere of minute village observation and gossip. He fell into the Llyddwdd world, as it were, like a thunderbolt falling in the daytime. Suddenly, and out of nothingness, he *was*. Rumour, indeed, vaguely averred that he was seen to arrive by a certain train from London, and to walk straight without hesitation to the old Manse, giving neither explanatory word nor sign to mortal as to his purpose there: but then the same fertile source of information also hinted that he was first beheld skimming down the slopes of steep Pen-y-pwll with exceeding swiftness, riding, as it appeared to the intelligent observer, upon an instrument not unlike a sieve and that he entered the house by the chimney. Of these conflicting reports, the former was the first to be generally circulated, but the latter, in view of the bizarre presence and eccentric ways of the newest inhabitant, obtained wider credence. By whatever means he arrived, there can be no doubt that he was in, and in possession of the Manse, on the first of May; because on the morning of that day he was inspected by Mrs Morgan ap Lloyd Jones, and subsequently by the numerous persons her report brought up the mountain slope, engaged in the curious occupation of nailing sheet-tin across the void window sockets of his new domicile—'blinding his house,' as Mrs Morgan ap Lloyd Jones not inaptly termed it.

He was a small-bodied, sallow faced little man, clad in a close-fitting garment of some stiff, dark material, which Mr Parry Davies, the Llyddwdd shoemaker, opined was leather. His aquiline nose, thin lips, high cheek-ridges, and pointed chin, were all small and mutually well proportioned; but the bones and muscles of his face were rendered excessively prominent and distinct by his extreme leanness. The same cause contributed to the sunken appearance of the large eager-looking grey eyes, that gazed forth from under his phenomenally wide and high forehead. It was this latter feature that most powerfully attracted the attention of an observer. It seemed to be great beyond all preconceived ratio to the rest of his countenance. Dimensions, corrugations, wrinkles, venation, were alike abnormally exaggerated. Below it his eyes

glowed like lights in some cave at a cliff's foot. It so over-powered and suppressed the rest of his face as to give an *unhuman* appearance almost, to what would otherwise have been an unquestionably handsome profile. The lank black hair that hung unkempt before his eyes served to increase rather than conceal this effect, by adding to unnatural altitude a suggestion of hydrocephalic projection: and the idea of something ultra human was furthermore accentuated by the temporal arteries that pulsated visibly through his transparent yellow skin. No wonder, in view even of these things, that among the highly and over-poetical Cymric of Llyddwdd the sieve theory of arrival found considerable favour.

It was his bearing and actions, however, much more than his personality, that won over believers to the warlock notion of matters. In almost every circumstance of life the observant villagers soon found his ways were not only not *their* ways, but altogether inexplicable upon any theory of motives they could conceive. Thus, in a small matter at the beginning, when Arthur Price Williams, eminent and famous in every tavern in Caernarvonshire for his social gifts, endeavoured, in choicest Welsh and even choicer English, to inveigle the stranger into conversation over the sheet-tin performance, he failed utterly. Inquisitorial supposition, straightforward enquiry, offer of assistance, suggestion of method, sarcasm, irony, abuse, and at last, gage of battle, though shouted with much effort from the road hedge, went unanswered and apparently unheard. Missile weapons, Arthur Price Williams found, were equally unavailing for the purpose of introduction, and the gathered crowd dispersed with unappeased curiosity and suspicion. Later in the day, the swarth apparition was seen striding down the mountain road towards the village, hatless, and with such swift width of step and set resolution of countenance, that Arthur Price Williams, beholding him from afar from the 'Pig and Whistle' doorway was seized with dire consternation, and hid behind the Dutch oven in the kitchen till he was past. Wild panic also smote the school-house as the children were coming out, and drove them indoors like leaves before a gale. He was merely seeking the provision shop, however, and erupted thencefrom after a prolonged stay, loaded with a various armful of blue parcels, a loaf, herrings, pigs' trotters, salt pork, and a black bottle, with which he returned in the same swift projectile gait to the Manse. His way of shopping was to name,

and to name simply, without solitary other word of explanation, civility or request, the article he required.

The shopkeeper's crude meteorological superstitions and inquisitive commonplaces, he seemed not to hear, and he might have been esteemed deaf if he had not evinced the promptest attention to the faintest relevant remark. Consequently it was speedily rumoured that he was determined to avoid all but the most necessary human intercourse. He lived altogether mysteriously, in the decaying manse, without mortal service or companionship, presumably sleeping on planks or litter, and either preparing his own food or eating it raw. This, coupled with the popular conception of the haunting patricides, did much to strengthen the popular supposition of some vast gulf between the newcomer and common humanity. The only thing that was in-harmonious with this idea of severance from mankind was a constant flux of crates filled with grotesquely contorted glassware, cases of brazen and steel instruments, huge coils of wire, vast iron and fire-clay implements, of inconceivable purpose, jars and phials labelled in black and scarlet—POISON, huge packages of books, and gargantuan rolls of cartridge paper, which set in towards his Llyddwdd quarters from the outer world. The apparently hieroglyphic inscriptions on these various consignments revealed at the profound scrutiny of Pugh Jones that the style and title of the new inhabitant was Dr Moses Nebogipfel, Ph.D., F.R.S., N.W.R., PAID: at which discovery much edification was felt, especially among the purely Welsh-speaking community. Further than this, these arrivals, by their evident unfitness for any allowable mortal use, and inferential diabolicalness, filled the neighbourhood with a vague horror and lively curiosity, which were greatly augmented by the extraordinary phenomena, and still more extraordinary accounts thereof, that followed their reception in the Manse.

The first of these was on Wednesday, the fifteenth of May, when the Calvinistic Methodists of Llyddwdd had their annual commemoration festival; on which occasion, in accordance with custom, dwellers in the surrounding parishes of Rwtstog, Peu-y-garn, Caergyllwdd, Llanrdd, and even distant Llanrwst flocked into the village. Popular thanks to Providence were materialized in the usual way, by means of plumb-bread and butter, mixed tea, *terza*, consecrated flirtations, kiss-in-the-ring, rough-and-tumble football, and vituperative political speechmaking. About half-

past eight the fun began to tarnish, and the assembly to break up; and by nine numerous couples and occasional groups were wending their way in the darkling along the hilly Llyddwdd and Rwestog road. It was a calm warm night; one of those nights when lamps, gas and heavy sleep seem stupid ingratitude to the Creator. The zenith sky was an ineffable deep lucent blue, and the evening star hung golden in the liquid darkness of the west. In the north-north-west, a faint phosphorescence marked the sunken day. The moon was just rising, pallid and gibbous over the huge haze-dimmed shoulder of Pen-y-pwll. Against the wan eastern sky, from the vague outline of the mountain slope, the Manse stood out black, clear, and solitary. The stillness of the twilight had hushed the myriad murmurs of the day. Only the sounds of footsteps and voices and laughter, that came fitfully rising and falling from the roadway, and an intermittent hammering in the darkened dwelling, broke the silence. Suddenly a strange whizzing, buzzing whirr filled the night air, and a bright flicker glanced across the dim path of the wayfarers. All eyes were turned in astonishment to the old Manse. The house no longer loomed a black featureless block but was filled to overflowing with light. From the gaping holes in the roof, from chinks and fissures amid tiles and brickwork, from every gap which Nature or man had pierced in the crumbling old shell, a blinding blue-white glare was streaming, beside which the rising moon seemed a disc of opaque sulphur. The thin mist of the dewy night had caught the violet glow and hung, unearthly smoke, over the colourless blaze. A strange turmoil and outcrying in the old Manse now began, and grew ever more audible to the clustering spectators, and therewith came clanging loud impacts against the window-guarding tin. Then from the gleaming roof-gaps of the house suddenly vomited forth a wonderous swarm of heteromorous living things—swallows, sparrows, martins, owls, bats, insects in visible multitudes, to hang for many minutes a noisy, gyring, spreading cloud over the black gables and chimneys, . . . and then slowly to thin out and vanish away in the night.

As this tumult died away the throbbing humming that had first arrested attention grew once more in the listener's hearing, until at last it was the only sound in the long stillness. Presently, however, the road gradually awoke again to the beating and shuffling of feet, as the knots of Rwestog people, one by one, turned their

blinking eyes from the dazzling whiteness and, pondering deeply, continued their homeward way.

The cultivated reader will have already discerned that this phenomenon, which sowed a whole crop of uncanny thoughts in the minds of these worthy folk, was simply the installation of the electric light in the Manse. Truly, this last vicissitude of the old house was its strangest one. Its revival to mortal life was like the raising of Lazarus. From that hour forth, by night and day, behind the tin-blinded windows, the tamed lightning illuminated every corner of its quickly changing interior. The almost frenzied energy of the lank-haired, leather-clad little doctor swept away into obscure holes and corners and common destruction, creeper sprays, toadstools, rose leaves, birds' nests, birds' eggs, cobwebs, and all the coatings and lovingly fanciful trimmings with which that maternal old dotard, Dame Nature, had tricked out the decaying house for its lying in state. The magneto-electric apparatus whirred incessantly amid the vestiges of the wainscoted dining-room, where once the eighteenth century tenant had piously read morning prayer and eaten his Sunday dinner; and in the place of his sacred symbolical sideboard was a nasty heap of coke. The oven of the bakehouse supplied substratum and material for a forge, whose snorting, panting bellows, and intermittent, ruddy, spark-laden blast made the benighted, but Bible-lit Welsh women murmur in liquid Cymric, as they hurried by: 'Whose breath kindleth coals, and out of his mouth is a flame of fire.' For the idea these good people formed of it was that a tame, but occasionally restive, leviathan had been added to the terrors of the haunted house. The constantly increasing accumulation of pieces of machinery, big brass castings, block tin, casks, crates, and packages of innumerable articles, by their demands for space, necessitated the sacrifice of most of the slighter partitions of the house; and the beams and flooring of the upper chambers were also mercilessly sawn away by the tireless scientist in such a way as to convert them into mere shelves and corner brackets of the atrial space between cellars and rafters. Some of the sounder planking was utilized in the making of a rude broad table, upon which files and heaps of geometrical diagrams speedily accumulated. The production of these latter seemed to be the object upon which the mind of Dr Nebogipfel was so inflexibly set. All other circumstances of his life were made entirely subsidiary to this one

occupation. Strangely complicated traceries of lines they were—plans, elevations, sections by surfaces and solids, that, with the help of logarithmic mechanical apparatus and involved curvigraphical machines, spread swiftly under his expert hands over yard after yard of paper. Some of these symbolized shapes he despatched to London, and they presently returned, *realized*, in forms of brass and ivory, and nickel and mahogany. Some of them he himself translated into solid models of metal and wood; occasionally casting the metallic ones in moulds of sand, but often laboriously hewing them out of the block for greater precision of dimension. In this second process, among other appliances, he employed a steel circular saw set with diamond powder and made to rotate with extraordinary swiftness, by means of steam and multiplying gear. It was this latter thing, more than all else, that filled Llyddwdd with a sickly loathing of the Doctor as a man of blood and darkness. Often in the silence of midnight—for the newest inhabitant heeded the sun but little in his incessant research—the awakened dwellers around Pen-y-pwll would hear, what was at first a complaining murmur, like the groaning of a wounded man, ‘*gurr-urr-urr-URR*,’ rising by slow gradations in pitch and intensity to the likeness of a voice in despairing passionate protest, and at last ending abruptly in a sharp piercing shriek that rang in the ears for hours afterwards and begot numberless grewsome dreams.

The mystery of all these unearthly noises and inexplicable phenomena, the Doctor’s inhumanly brusque bearing and evident uneasiness when away from his absorbing occupation, his entire and jealous seclusion, and his terrifying behaviour to certain officious intruders, roused popular resentment and curiosity to the highest, and a plot was already on foot to make some sort of popular inquisition (probably accompanied by an experimental ducking) into his proceedings, when the sudden death of the hunchback Hughes in a fit, brought matters to an unexpected crisis. It happened in broad daylight, in the roadway just opposite the Manse. Half a dozen people witnessed it. The unfortunate creature was seen to fall suddenly and roll about on the pathway, struggling violently, as it appeared to the spectators, with some invisible assailant. When assistance reached him he was purple in the face and his blue lips were covered with a glairy foam. He died almost as soon as they laid hands on him.

Owen Thomas, the general practitioner, vainly assured the ex-

cited crowd which speedily gathered outside the 'Pig and Whistle,' whither the body had been carried, that death was unquestionably natural. A horrible zymotic suspicion had gone forth that deceased was the victim of Dr Nebogipfel's imputed aerial powers. The contagion was with the news that passed like a flash through the village and set all Llyddwdd seething with a fierce desire for action against the worker of this iniquity. Downright superstition, which had previously walked somewhat modestly about the village, in the fear of ridicule and the Doctor, now appeared boldly before the sight of all men, clad in the terrible majesty of truth. People who had hitherto kept entire silence as to their fears of the imp-like philosopher suddenly discovered a fearsome pleasure in whispering dread possibilities to kindred souls, and from whispers of possibilities their sympathy-fostered utterances soon developed into unhesitating asserverations in loud and even high-pitched tones. The fancy of a captive leviathan, already alluded to, which had up to now been the horrid but secret joy of a certain conclave of ignorant old women, was published to all the world as indisputable fact; it being stated, on her own authority, that the animal had, on one occasion, chased Mrs Morgan ap Lloyd Jones almost into Rwestog. The story that Nebogipfel had been heard within the Manse chanting, in conjunction with the Williamses, horrible blasphemy, and that a 'black flapping thing, of the size of a young calf,' had thereupon entered the gap in the roof, was universally believed in. A grisly anecdote, that owed its origination to a stumble in the churchyard, was circulated, to the effect that the Doctor had been caught ghoulishly tearing with his long white fingers at a new-made grave. The numerously attested declaration that Nebogipfel and the murdered Williams had been seen hanging the sons on a ghostly gibbet, at the back of the house, was due to the electric illumination of a fitfully wind-shaken tree. A hundred like stories hurtled thickly about the village and darkened the moral atmosphere. The Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook, hearing of the tumult, sallied forth to allay it, and narrowly escaped drawing on himself the gathering lightning.

By eight o'clock (it was Monday the twenty-second of July) a grand demonstration had organized itself against the 'necromancer.' A number of bolder hearts among the men formed the nucleus of the gathering, and at nightfall Arthur Price Williams, John Peters, and others brought torches and raised their spark-

raining flames aloft with curt ominous suggestions. The less adventurous village manhood came straggling late to the rendezvous, and with them the married women came in groups of four or five, greatly increasing the excitement of the assembly with their shrill hysterical talk and active imaginations. After these the children and young girls, overcome by undefinable dread, crept quietly out of the too silent and shadowy houses into the yellow glare of the pine knots, and the tumultuary noise of the thickening people. By nine, nearly half the Llyddwdd population was massed before the 'Pig and Whistle.' There was a confused murmur of many tongues, but above all the stir and chatter of the growing crowd could be heard the coarse, cracked voice of the blood-thirsty old fanatic, Pritchard, drawing a congenial lesson from the fate of the four hundred and fifty idolators of Carmel.

Just as the church clock was beating out the hour, an occultly originated movement up hill began, and soon the whole assembly, men, women, and children, was moving in a fear-compacted mass, towards the ill-fated doctor's abode. As they left the brightly-lit public house behind them, a quavering female voice began singing one of those grim-sounding canticles that so satisfy the Calvinistic ear. In a wonderfully short time, the tune had been caught up, first by two or three, and then by the whole procession, and the manifold shuffling of heavy shoon grew swiftly into rhythm with the beats of the hymn. When, however, their goal rose, like a blazing star, over the undulation of the road, the volume of the chanting suddenly died away, leaving only the voices of the ringleaders, shouting indeed now somewhat out of tune, but, if anything, more vigorously than before. Their persistence and example nevertheless failed to prevent a perceptible breaking and slackening of the pace, as the Manse was neared, and when the gate was reached, the whole crowd came to a dead halt. Vague fear for the future had begotten the courage that had brought the villagers thus far: fear for the present now smothered its kindred birth. The intense blaze from the gaps in the death-like silent pile lit up rows of livid, hesitating faces: and a smothered, frightened sobbing broke out among the children. 'Well,' said Arthur Price Williams, addressing Jack Peters, with an expert assumption of modest discipleship, 'what do we do *now*, Jack?' But Peters was regarding the Manse with manifest dubiety, and ignored the question. The Llyddwdd witch-find seemed to be suddenly aborting.

At this juncture old Pritchard suddenly pushed his way forward, gesticulating weirdly with his bony hands and long arms. 'What!' he shouted, in broken notes, 'fear ye to smite when the Lord hateth? *Burn the warlock!*' And seizing a flambeau from Peters, he flung open the rickety gaze and strode on down the drive, his torch leaving a coiling trail of scintillant sparks on the night wind. 'Burn the warlock,' screamed a shrill voice from the wavering crowd, and in a moment the gregarious human instinct had prevailed. With an outburst of incoherent, threatening voice, the mob poured after the fanatic.

Woe betide the Philosopher now! They expected barricaded doors; but with a groan of a conscious insufficiency, the hinge-rusted portals swung wide at the push of Pritchard. Blinded by the light, he hesitated for a second on the threshold, while his followers came crowding up behind him.

Those who were there say that they saw Dr Nebogipfel, standing in the toneless electric glare, on a peculiar erection of brass and ebony and ivory; and that he seemed to be smiling at them, half pityingly and half scornfully, as it is said martyrs are wont to smile. Some assert, moreover, that by his side was sitting a tall man, clad in ravenswing, and some even aver that this second man—whom others deny—bore on his face the likeness of the Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook, while others declare that he resembled the description of the murdered Williams. Be that as it may, it must now go unproven for ever, for suddenly a wondrous thing smote the crowd as it swarmed in through the entrance. Pritchard pitched headlong on the floor senseless. While shouts and shrieks of anger, changed in mid utterance to yells of agonizing fear, or to the mute gasp of heart-stopping horror: and then a frantic rush was made for the doorway.

For the calm, smiling doctor, and his quiet, black-clad companion, and the polished platform which upbore them, had vanished before their eyes!

How an Esoteric Story became Possible

A silvery-foliaged willow by the side of a mere. Out of the cress-spangled waters below, rise clumps of sedge-blades, and among them glows the purple fleur-de-lys, and sapphire vapour of forget-me-nots. Beyond is a sluggish stream of water reflecting the in-

tense blue of the moist Fenland sky; and beyond that a low osier-fringed eyot. This limits all the visible universe, save some scattered pollards and spear-like poplars showing against the violet distance. At the foot of the willow reclines the Author watching a copper butterfly fluttering from iris to iris.

Who can fix the colours of the sunset? Who can take a cast of flame? Let him essay to register the mutations of mortal thought as it wanders from a copper butterfly to the disembodied soul, and thence passes to spiritual motions and the vanishing of Dr Moses Nebogipfel and the Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook from the world of sense.

As the author lay basking there and speculating, as another once did under the Budh tree, on mystic transmutations, a presence became apparent. There was a somewhat on the eyot between him and the purple horizon—an opaque reflecting entity, making itself dimly perceptible by reflection in the water to his averted eyes. He raised them in curious surprise.

What was it?

He stared in stupefied astonishment at the apparition, doubted, blinked, rubbed his eyes, stared again, and believed. It was solid, it cast a shadow, and it upbore two men. There was white metal in it that blazed in the noontide sun like incandescent magnesium, ebony bars that drank in the light, and white parts that gleamed like polished ivory. Yet withal it seemed unreal. The thing was not square as a machine ought to be, but all awry: it was twisted and seemed falling over, hanging in two directions, as those queer crystals called triclinic hang; it seemed like a machine that had been crushed or warped; it was suggestive and not confirmatory, like the machine of a disordered dream. The men, too, were dreamlike. One was short, intensely sallow, with a strangely-shaped head, and clad in a garment of dark olive green; the other was, grotesquely out of place, evidently a clergyman of the Established Church, a fair-haired, pale-faced respectable-looking man.

Once more doubt came rushing in on the author. He sprawled back and stared at the sky, rubbed his eyes, stared at the willow wands that hung between him and the blue, closely examined his hands to see if his eyes had any new things to relate about them, and then sat up again and stared at the eyot. A gentle breeze stirred the osiers; a white bird was flapping its way through the lower sky. The machine of the vision had vanished! It was an

illusion—a projection of the subjective—an assertion of the immateriality of mind. 'Yes,' interpolated the sceptic faculty, 'but *how comes it that the clergyman is still there?*'

The clergyman had not vanished. In intense perplexity the author examined this black-coated phenomenon as he stood regarding the world with hand-shaded eyes. The author knew the periphery of that eyot by heart, and the question that troubled him was, 'Whence?' The clergyman looked as Frenchmen look when they land at Newhaven—intensely travel-worn; his clothes showed rubbed and seamy in the bright day. When he came to the edge of the island and shouted a question to the author, his voice was broken and trembled. 'Yes,' answered the author, 'it is an island. *How did you get there?*'

But the clergyman, instead of replying to this asked a very strange question.

He said 'Are you in the nineteenth century?' The author made him repeat that question before he replied. 'Thank heaven,' cried the clergyman rapturously. Then he asked very eagerly for the exact date.

'August the ninth, eighteen hundred and eighty-seven,' he repeated after the author. 'Heaven be praised!' and sinking down on the eyot so that the sedges hid him, he audibly burst into tears.

Now the author was mightily surprised at all this, and going a certain distance along the mere, he obtained a punt, and getting into it he hastily poled to the eyot where he had last seen the clergyman. He found him lying insensible among the reeds, and carried him in his punt to the house where he lived, and the clergyman lay there insensible for ten days.

Meanwhile, it became known that he was the Rev. Elijah Cook, who had disappeared from Llyddwdd with Dr Moses Nebogipfel three weeks before.

On August 19th, the nurse called the author out of his study to speak to the invalid. He found him perfectly sensible, but his eyes were strangely bright, and his face was deadly pale. 'Have you found out who I am?' he asked.

'You are the Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook, Master of Arts, of Pembroke College, Oxford, and Rector of Llyddwdd, near Rwestog, in Caernarvon.'

He bowed his head. 'Have you been told anything of how I came here?'

'I found you among the reeds,' I said. He was silent and thoughtful for a while. 'I have a deposition to make. Will you take it? It concerns the murder of an old man named Williams, which occurred in 1862, this disappearance of Dr Moses Nebogipfel, the abduction of a ward in the year 4003——'

The author stared.

'The year of our Lord 4003,' he corrected. 'She would come. Also several assaults on public officials in the years 17,901 and 2.'

The author coughed.

'The years 17,901 and 2, and valuable medical, social, and physiographical data for all time.'

After a consultation with the doctor, it was decided to have the deposition taken down, and this is which constitutes the remainder of the story of the Chronic Argonauts.

On August 29th 1887, the Rev. Elijah Cook died. His body was conveyed to Llyddwdd, and buried in the churchyard there.

The Esoteric Story Based on the Clergyman's Depositions

The Anachronic Man

Incidentally it has been remarked in the first part, how the Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook attempted and failed to quiet the superstitious excitement of the villagers on the afternoon of the memorable twenty-second of July. His next proceeding was to try and warn the unsocial philosopher of the dangers which impended. With this intent he made his way from the rumour-pelted village, through the silent, slumbrous heat of the July afternoon, up the slopes of Pen-y-pwll, to the old Manse. His loud knocking at the heavy door called forth dull resonance from the interior, and produced a shower of lumps of plaster and fragments of decaying touchwood from the rickety porch, but beyond this the dreamy stillness of the summer mid-day remained unbroken. Everything was so quiet as he stood there expectant, that the occasional speech of the haymakers a mile away in the fields, over towards Rwestog, could be distinctly heard. The reverend gentleman waited long, then knocked again, and waited again,

and listened, until the echoes and the patter of rubbish had melted away into the deep silence, and the creeping in the blood-vessels of his ears had become oppressively audible, swelling and sinking with sounds like the confused murmuring of a distant crowd, and causing a suggestion of anxious discomfort to spread slowly over his mind.

Again he knocked, this time loud, quick blows with his stick, and almost immediately afterwards, leaning his hand against the door, he kicked its panels vigorously. There was a shouting of echoes, a protesting jarring of hinges, and then the oaken door yawned and displayed, in the blue blaze of the electric light, vestiges of partitions, piles of planking and straw, masses of metal, heaps of papers and overthrown apparatus, to the rector's astonished eyes. 'Doctor Nebogipfel, excuse my intruding,' he called out, but the only response was a reverberation among the black beams and shadows that hung dimly above. For almost a minute he stood there, leaning forward over the threshold, staring at the glittering mechanisms, diagrams, books, scattered indiscriminately with broken food, packing cases, heaps of coke, hay, and microcosmic lumber, about the undivided house cavity; and then, removing his hat and treading stealthily, as if the silence were a sacred thing, he stepped into the apparently deserted shelter of the Doctor.

His eyes sought everywhere, as he cautiously made his way through the confusion, with a strange anticipation of finding Nebogipfel hidden somewhere in the sharp black shadows among the litter, so strong in him was an indescribable sense of a perceiving presence. This feeling was so vivid that, when, after an abortive exploration, he seated himself upon Nebogipfel's diagram-covered bench, it made him explain in a forced hoarse voice to the stillness—'He is not here. I have something to say to him. I must wait for him.' It was so vivid, too, that the trickling of some grit down the wall in the vacant corner behind him made him start round in a sudden perspiration. There was nothing visible there, but turning his head back, he was stricken rigid with horror by the swift, noiseless apparition of Nebogipfel, ghastly pale, and with red stained hands, crouching upon a strange-looking metallic platform, and with his deep grey eyes looking intently into the visitor's face.

Cook's first impulse was to yell out his fear, but his throat was paralysed, and he could only stare fascinated at the bizarre coun-

tenance that had thus clashed suddenly into visibility. The lips were quivering and the breath came in short convulsive sobs. The un-human forehead was wet with perspiration, while the veins were swollen, knotted and purple. The Doctor's red hands, too, he noticed, were trembling, as the hands of slight people tremble after intense muscular exertion, and his lips closed and opened as if he, too, had a difficulty in speaking as he gasped, 'Who—what do you do here?'

Cook answered not a word, but stared with hair erect, open mouth, and dilated eyes, at the dark red unmistakeable smear that streaked the pure ivory and gleaming nickel and shining ebony of the platform.

'What are you doing here?' repeated the doctor, raising himself. 'What do you want?'

Cook gave a convulsive effort. 'In Heaven's name, *what* are you?' he gasped; and then black curtains came closing in from every side, sweeping the squatting, dwarfish phantasm that reeled before him into rayless, voiceless night.

The Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook recovered his perceptions to find himself lying on the floor of the old Manse, and Doctor Nebogipfel, no longer blood-stained and with all trace of his agitation gone, kneeling by his side and bending over him with a glass of brandy in his hand. 'Do not be alarmed, sir,' said the philosopher with a faint smile, as the clergyman opened his eyes. 'I have not treated you to a disembodied spirit, or anything nearly so extraordinary . . . may I offer you this?'

The clergyman submitted quietly to the brandy, and then stared perplexed into Nebogipfel's face, vainly searching his memory for what occurrences had preceded his insensibility. Raising himself at last into a sitting posture, he saw the oblique mass of metals that had appeared with the doctor, and immediately all that happened flashed back upon his mind. He looked from this structure to the recluse, and from the recluse to the structure.

'There is absolutely no deception, sir,' said Nebogipfel with the slightest trace of mockery in his voice. 'I lay no claim to work in matters spiritual. It is a *bona fide* mechanical contrivance, a thing emphatically of this sordid world. Excuse me—just one minute.' He rose from his knees, stepped upon the mahogany platform, took a curiously curved lever in his hand and pulled it over. Cook

rubbed his eyes. *There* certainly was no deception. The doctor and the machine had vanished.

The reverend gentleman felt no horror this time, only a slight nervous shock, to see the doctor presently re-appear 'in the twinkling of an eye' and get down from the machine. From that he walked in a straight line with his hands behind his back and his face downcast, until his progress was stopped by the intervention of a circular saw; then, turning round sharply on his heel, he said:

'I was thinking while I was . . . away . . . Would you like to come? I should greatly value a companion.'

The clergyman was still sitting, hatless, on the floor. 'I am afraid,' he said slowly, 'you will think me stupid—'

'Not at all,' interrupted the doctor. 'The stupidity is mine. You desire to have all this explained . . . wish to know where I am going first. I have spoken so little with men of this age for the last ten years or more that I have ceased to make due allowances and concessions for other minds. I will do my best, but that I fear will be very unsatisfactory. It is a long story . . . do you find that floor comfortable to sit on? If not, there is a nice packing case over there, or some straw behind you, or this bench—the diagrams are done with now, but I am afraid of the drawing pins. You may sit on the Chronic Argol'

'No, thank you,' slowly replied the clergyman, eyeing that deformed structure thus indicated, suspiciously; 'I am *quite* comfortable here.'

'Then I will begin. Do you read fables? Modern ones?'

'I am afraid I must confess to a good deal of fiction,' said the clergyman depreciatingly. 'In Wales the ordained ministers of the sacraments of the Church have perhaps *too* large a share of leisure—'

'Have you read the Ugly Duckling?'

'Hans Christian Andersen's—yes—in my childhood.'

'A wonderful story—a story that has even been full of tears and heart swelling hopes for me, since first it came to me in my lonely boyhood and saved me from unspeakable things. That story, if you understand it well, will tell you almost all that you should know of me to comprehend how that machine came to be thought of in a mortal brain . . . Even when I read that simple narrative for the first time, a thousand bitter experiences had

begun the teaching of my isolation among the people of my birth—I knew the story was for me. The ugly duckling that proved to be a swan, that lived through all contempt and bitterness, to float at last sublime. From that hour forth, I dreamt of meeting with my kind, dreamt of encountering that sympathy I knew was my profoundest need. Twenty years I lived in that hope, lived and worked, lived and wandered, loved even, and, at last, despaired. Only once among all those millions of wondering, astonished, indifferent, contemptuous, and insidious faces that I met with in that passionate wandering, looked *one* upon me as I desired . . . looked——'

He paused. The Reverend Cook glanced up into his face, expecting some indication of the deep feeling that had sounded in his last words. It was downcast, clouded, and thoughtful, but the mouth was rigidly firm.

'In short, Mr Cook, I discovered that I was one of those superior Cagots called a genius—a man born out of my time—a man thinking the thoughts of a wiser age, doing things and believing things that men now *cannot* understand, and that in the years ordained to me there was nothing but silence and suffering for my soul—unbroken solitude, man's bitterest pain. I knew I was an Anachronic Man; my age was still to come. One filmy hope alone held me to life, a hope to which I clung until it had become a certain thing. Thirty years of unremitting toil and deepest thought among the hidden things of matter and form and life, and then *that*, the Chronic Argo, *the ship that sails through time*, and now I go to join my generation, to journey through the ages till my time has come.'

The Chronic Argo

Dr Nebogipfel paused, looking in sudden doubt at the clergyman's perplexed face. 'You think that sounds mad,' he said, 'to travel through time?'

'It certainly jars with accepted opinions,' said the clergyman, allowing the faintest suggestion of controversy to appear in his intonation, and speaking apparently to the Chronic Argo. Even clergyman of the Church of England you see can have a suspicion of illusions at times.

'It certainly *does* jar with accepted opinions,' agreed the philos-

opher cordially. 'It does more than that—it defies accepted opinions to mortal combat. Opinions of all sorts, Mr Cook,—Scientific Theories, Laws, Articles of Belief, or, to come to elements, Logical Premises, Ideas, or whatever you like to call them,—all are, from the infinite nature of things, so many diagrammatic caricatures of the ineffable,—caricatures altogether to be avoided save where they are necessary in the shaping of results—as chalk outlines are necessary to the painter and plans and sections to the engineer. Men, from the exigencies of their being, find this hard to believe.'

The Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook nodded his head with the quiet smile of one whose opponent has unwittingly given a point.

'It is as easy to come to regard ideas as complete reproductions of entities as it is to roll off a log. Hence it is that almost all civilized men believe in the *reality* of the Greek geometrical conceptions.'

'Oh! pardon me, sir,' interrupted Cook. 'Most men know that a geometrical point has no existence in matter, and the same with a geometrical line. I think you underrate . . .'

'Yes, yes, *those* things are recognized,' said Nebogipfel calmly; 'but now . . . a cube. Does that exist in the material universe?'

'Certainly.'

'An instantaneous cube?'

'I don't know what you intend by that expression.'

'Without any other sort of extension; a body having length, breadth, and thickness, exists?'

'What other sort of extension *can* there be?' asked Cook, with raised eyebrows.

'Has it never occurred to you that no form can exist in the material universe that has no extension in time? . . . Has it never glimmered upon your consciousness that nothing stood between men and a geometry of four dimensions—length, breadth, thickness, and *duration*—but the inertia of opinion, the impulse from the Levantine philosophers of the bronze age?'

'Putting it that way,' said the clergyman, 'it does look as though there was a flaw somewhere in the notion of tridimensional being; *but* . . .' He became silent, leaving that sufficiently eloquent 'but' to convey all the prejudice and distrust that filled his mind.

'When we take up this new light of a fourth dimension and re-examine our physical science in its illumination,' continued Nebogipfel, after a pause, 'we find ourselves no longer limited by

hopeless restriction to a certain beat of time—to our own generation. Locomotion along lines of duration—chronic navigation comes within the range, first, of geometrical theory, and then of practical mechanics. There *was* a time when men could only move horizontally and in their appointed country. The clouds floated above them unattainable things, mysterious chariots of those fearful gods who dwelt among the mountain summits. Speaking practically, man in those days was restricted to motion in two dimensions; and even there circumambient ocean and hypoborean fear bound him in. But those times were to pass away. First, the keel of Jason cut its way between the Symplegades, and then in the fulness of time, Columbus dropped anchor in a bay of Atlantis. Then man burst his bidimensional limits, and invaded the third dimension, soaring with Montgolfier into the clouds, and sinking with the diving bell into the purple treasure-caves of the waters. And now another step, and the hidden past and unknown future are before us. We stand upon a mountain summit with the plains of the ages spread below.’

Nebogipfel paused and looked down at his hearer.

The Reverend Elijah Cook was sitting with an expression of strong distrust on his face. Preaching much had brought home certain truths to him very vividly, and he always suspected rhetoric. ‘Are those things figures of speech,’ he asked; ‘or am I to take them as precise statements? Do you speak of travelling through time in the same way as one might speak of Omnipotence making His pathway on the storm, or do you—a—mean what you say?’

Dr Nebogipfel smiled quietly. ‘Come and look at these diagrams,’ he said, and then with elaborate simplicity he commenced to explain again to the clergyman the new quadridimensional geometry. Insensibly Cook’s aversion passed away, and seeming impossibility grew possible, now that such tangible things as diagrams and models could be brought forward in evidence. Presently he found himself asking questions, and his interest grew deeper and deeper as Nebogipfel slowly and with precise clearness unfolded the beautiful order of his strange invention. The moments slipped away unchecked, as the Doctor passed on to the narrative of his research, and it was with a start of surprise that the clergyman noticed the deep blue of the dying twilight through the open doorway.

‘The voyage,’ said Nebogipfel concluding his history, ‘will be full of un-dreamt of dangers—already in one brief essay I have

stood in the very jaws of death—but it is also full of the divinest promise of undreamt-of joy. Will you come? Will you walk among the people of the Golden Years? . . .’

But the mention of death by the philosopher had brought flooding back to the mind of Cook, all the horrible sensations of that first apparition.

‘Dr Nebogipfel . . . one question?’ He hesitated. ‘On your hands . . . *Was it blood?*’

Nebogipfel’s countenance fell. He spoke slowly.

‘When I had stopped my machine, I found myself in this room as it used to be. *Hark!*’

‘It is the wind in the trees towards Rwestog.’

‘It sounded like the voices of a multitude of people singing . . . when I had stopped I found myself in this room as it used to be. An old man, a young man, and a lad were sitting at a table—reading some book together. I stood behind them unsuspected. “Evil spirits assailed him,” read the old man; “but it is written, ‘to him that overcometh shall be given life eternal.’ They came as entreating friends, but he endured through all their snares. They came as principalities and powers, but he defied them in the name of the King of Kings. Once even it is told that in his study, while he was translating the New Testament into German, the Evil One himself appeared before him . . .” Just then the lad glanced timorously round, and with a fearful wail fainted away . . .’

‘The others sprang at me . . . It was a fearful grapple . . . The old man clung to my throat, screaming “Man or Devil, I defy thee . . .”’

‘I could not help it. We rolled together on the floor . . . the knife his trembling son had dropped came to my hand . . . *Hark!*’

He paused and listened, but Cook remained staring at him in the same horror-stricken attitude he had assumed when the memory of the blood-stained hands had rushed back over his mind.

‘Do you hear what they are crying? *Hark!*’

Burn the warlock! Burn the murderer!

‘Do you hear? There is no time to be lost.’

Slay the murderer of cripples. Kill the devil’s claw!

‘Come! Come!’

Cook, with a convulsive effort, made a gesture of repugnance and strode to the doorway. A crowd of black figures roaring

towards him in the red torchlight made him recoil. He shut the door and faced Nebogipfel.

The thin lips of the Doctor curled with a contemptuous sneer. "They will kill you if you stay," he said; and seizing his unresisting visitor by the wrist, he forced him towards the glittering machine. Cook sat down and covered his face with his hands.

In another moment the door was flung open, and old Pritchard stood blinking on the threshold.

A pause. A hoarse shout changing suddenly into a sharp shrill shriek.

A thunderous roar like the bursting forth of a great fountain of water.

The voyage of the Chronic Argonauts had begun.

End of This Part of the Chronic Argonauts

How did it end? How came it that Cook wept with joy to return once more to this nineteenth century of ours? Why did not Nebogipfel remain with him? All that, and more also, has been written, and will or will never be read, according as Fate may have decreed to the Curious Reader.

Jules Verne (1828-1905), was one of the prime movers of science fiction. This author's famous works—*Voyage to the Center of the Earth*, *From the Earth to the Moon*, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, and *The Mysterious Island*—are even more widely read today than they were a century ago when Verne first wrote them; but modern readers are not familiar with a score of his novels, some of which have never been translated into English. From one of his lesser known works, "The Begum's Fortune," we publish this complete chapter, which is virtually a superb short story by itself and which anticipates the theoretical possibility of an earth satellite.

The Begum's Fortune

BY JULES VERNE

Secret Weapon

Vanity being stronger than prudence with the ex-professor, Schultz was now eager to lay open his secret. He led the way with a hurried step into his study, closed the door carefully, and walking straight up to the book-case, touched a panel. Immediately an opening, concealed by the rows of books, appeared in the wall. This was the entrance to a narrow passage, leading by a stone staircase to the very foot of the Bull Tower.

There, an oaken door was opened by means of a little key, which never left the possession of the master of the place. A second door appeared, fastened with a padlock, similar to those used for strong boxes.

Herr Schultz threw open the heavy iron barrier, protected within by a complicated apparatus of explosive machinery, which Max, actuated by professional curiosity, would have much liked to examine; but his guide left him no time to do so.

The two men then found themselves before a third door, without any apparent lock or bolt, which yielded to a slight push, given, however, in a particular way.

This third barrier passed, Herr Schultz and his companion climbed an iron staircase of two hundred steps, and arrived at the summit of the Bull Tower, overlooking all the city of Stahlstadt.

In the centre of a sort of casemate, pierced with numerous embrasures, stood a steel cannon.

"There!" exclaimed the professor, who had not uttered a word since they left the dining-room.

It was the most enormous piece of ordnance Max had ever beheld. A breach-loader of at least three hundred tons, its mouth measured nearly five feet in diameter. Mounted on a steel carriage, and running on rails of the same metal, it might have been manœuvred by a child, so easy were all its movements made by a system of cogged wheels. A spring, fixed at the back of the carriage, had the effect of annulling the recoil, or at least producing a perfectly equal reaction, so that after each shot the gun returned to its first position.

"And what may be the perforating power of this piece?" asked Max, who could not restrain his admiration.

"At twenty thousand yards we can pierce a forty-inch plate as easily as if it were a slice of bread and butter!"

"And its range?"

"Its range?" cried Schultz enthusiastically. "Ah! you said just now that our imitative genius had done nothing more than double the range of former guns! Well, with this fellow, I would undertake to send, with tolerable precision, a projectile to the distance of thirty miles!"

"Thirty miles!" cried Max. "Thirty miles! What new powder can you use?"

"Oh! I can tell you everything, now," replied Herr Schultz, in a peculiar tone. "There is no inconvenience in revealing my secrets to you. Large grained powder has served its time. Gun-cotton is what I use; its expansive power is four times that of ordinary powder, and I increase it fivefold of mixing with it eight-tenths of its weight of nitrate of potash."

"But," observed Max, "no piece, though made of the best steel, could stand that long. After four or five shots your cannon will be impaired, and soon become useless."

"If it were only to fire one shot that one would be sufficient!"

"It would be an expensive one."

"It would cost a million, for that is the net cost of the gun."

"One shot worth a million!"

"What matter, so that it destroyed a thousand millions!"

"A thousand millions!" cried Max.

However, he restrained the mingled horror and admiration with which this fearful agent of destruction inspired him, and added:

"It is assuredly a wonderful and astonishing piece of artillery, but, notwithstanding its merits, it bears out my theory, there are improvements certainly, but it is all imitation, no invention."

"No invention!" responded Herr Schultz, shrugging his shoulders. "I repeat that I have now no secrets from you. Come with me."

The King of Steel and his companion then left the casemate and descended to a lower story, by means of an hydraulic lift. Here lay a large number of long objects, cylindrical in shape, which might, from a distance, have been taken for dismounted cannon.

"There are our shells," said Herr Schultz.

This time Max was obliged to acknowledge that they resembled nothing he had ever seen before. They were enormous tubes, six feet in length and three in diameter, sheathed in lead in such a way as to fit into the rifling of the gun, closed behind by a steel plate, and the point finished off by a steel tip, supplied with a percussion button.

Nothing in their appearance indicated the special nature of these shells; though Max felt that in them was contained some terrible element of destruction, surpassing all that had ever before been made or thought of.

"Can you not guess?" asked Herr Schultz, seeing that his companion remained silent.

"Indeed, no, sir! Why should you want a shell so long and so heavy—in appearance at least?"

"The appearance is deceitful," answered Herr Schultz; "and there is no great difference in their weight to that of an ordinary shell of the same calibre. Come! I must tell you everything. A fusee shell of glass, encased in oak, charged with liquid carbonic acid by seventy atmospheres of inferior pressure. The fall provokes the explosion of the case and the return of the liquid to a gaseous state. An enormous volume of carbonic acid gas rushes into the air, and a cold of a hundred degrees below zero seizes upon the surrounding atmosphere. Every living thing within a radius of thirty yards from the centre of the explosion is at once

frozen and suffocated. I say thirty yards as the lowest calculation, but the action would really extend much farther, say to a hundred or a couple of hundred yards.

"Another capital thing about it is, that the carbonic acid gas, remaining a very long time near the ground, by reason of its weight, being greater than that of air, will preserve the dangerous properties of the zone for many hours after the first explosion, so that any creature which may attempt to enter or pass through it must infallibly perish. The effect of that shot will be both instantaneous and lasting. Besides, with my plan, there will be no wounded, only dead!"

Herr Schultz displayed manifest pleasure in exhibiting the merits of his invention. His good humour had returned, he was flushed with pride, and his teeth gleamed.

"You are to imagine," he resumed, "a sufficient number of my pieces of ordnance directed against a besieged town. Supposing one sufficient for the destruction of a place of two acres and a half in extent, then, for a town of two thousand five hundred acres, we must have a hundred batteries, each consisting of ten suitable guns. Now, let us suppose all our guns in position, the weather calm and favourable, the general signal given by an electric wire. In a minute there would not be a single living being remaining in an extent of two thousand five hundred acres! The town would be submerged in a regular ocean of carbonic acid gas! The idea occurred to me last year on reading the medical report of the accidental death of a little miner in the Albrecht pit. I had the first inspiration at Naples, when I visited the Dog Grotto.* But that last fact was needed to put the finishing stroke to my thought. You comprehend the principle, do you not? An artificial ocean of pure carbonic acid! Now, the proportion of a fifth of this gas would be sufficient to render the air unbreathable."

Max did not utter a word. He was regularly struck dumb. Herr Schultz felt his triumph so keenly, that he did not wish to take advantage of it.

"There is only one detail which troubles me," said he.

* The Grotto del Cano, in the neighbourhood of Naples, borrows its name from the curious property its atmosphere possesses of suffocating a dog, or any small four-legged animal, without doing any harm to a man standing upright—this is owing to a layer of about two feet of carbonic acid gas, which is kept by its specific weight close to the ground.

"And what can that be?" asked Max.

"That I have not succeeded in suppressing the sound of the explosion. It makes my gun too much like a common cannon. Just think what it would be if I could manage to have a silent shot. Sudden death comes noiselessly upon a hundred thousand men at once, on some calm and serene night!"

The enchanting prospect thus called up threw Herr Schultz into a brown study. From this reverie, which was but a deep immersion in a bath of self-love, he was aroused by Max observing:

"Very good, sir, very good! but a thousand guns of this description mean time and money."

"Money? we are overflowing with it! Time? Time is ours!"

And indeed this German, the last of his school, believed what he said.

"Well," replied Max, "your shell loaded with carbonic acid is not perfectly new after all, for it is derived from those suffocating projectiles which have been known for many years; but that it may be eminently destructive, I do not deny. Only——"

"Only?"

"It is light for its size, and if it is ever projected thirty miles——"

"It is only made to go six," answered Herr Schultz, smiling. "But," he added, pointing to another shell, "here is one of steel. This fellow is full, and contains a hundred little guns, symmetrically arranged, fitted one into the other, like the parts of a telescope. Having been fired as projectiles, they will become cannon to vomit forth in their turn little shells loaded with incendiary matter. It will be a whole battery hurled through space, to carry flame and death into a town by covering it with a shower of inextinguishable fire! This has the requisite weight to go the thirty miles of which I spoke. In a short time a trial of it will be made in such a way that unbelievers may go if they like and handle the hundred thousand corpses which it will have stretched on the ground!"

Here the dominoes gleamed so intolerably in Herr Schultz's mouth, that Max felt a strong desire to smash in a dozen or so of them, but contained himself. He had not yet heard all.

Herr Schultz resumed:

"I have said that a decisive experiment is shortly to be made."

"How? Where?" cried Max.

"How? With one of these shells, which thrown by my gun from the platform, will cross the Cascade Mountains. Where? There exists a city, separated from us by at most thirty miles, upon whose inhabitants it will come like a thunder-clap, for even if they expected it, they could not ward it off, or escape the startling effects. This is now the 5th of September. Well, on the 13th, at a quarter before midnight, Frankville will disappear from off American soil! The burning of Sodom will be rivalled. Professor Schultz, in his turn, will let loose the fires of Heaven!"

At this unexpected declaration Max felt the blood curdle in his veins. Fortunately Herr Schultz did not perceive his agitation.

"Now you see," he continued in an easy tone, "we act just contrary to the founders of Frankville. We search for the secret of abridging the lives of men, whilst they seek to lengthen them. However, everything has an object in nature, and Dr. Sarrasin, in founding that isolated city, has, without suspecting it, placed a magnificent field of experiments within my reach."

Max could scarcely believe his ears.

"But," said he, and the involuntary tremor in his voice attracted for a moment the attention of the King of Steel, "the inhabitants of Frankville have done nothing to you, sir. You have not, so far as I know, any reason for picking a quarrel with them."

"My dear fellow," replied Herr Schultz, "in your brain, though well organised in other respects, there is a fund of Celtic ideas, which would do you much injury were you to live long enough! Right—Good—Evil are purely relative, and quite conventional words. Nothing is positive but the grand laws of nature. The law of competition has the same claim as that of gravitation. It is folly to resist, while to submit and follow in the way it points out, is only wise and reasonable, and therefore I mean to destroy Dr. Sarrasin's city. Thanks to my cannon, my fifty thousand Germans will easily make an end of the hundred thousand dreamers over there, who now constitute a group condemned to perish."

The Artificial Satellite

The great gun is fired, but with unforeseen results.

The catastrophe premeditated by Herr Schultz was to take place on this very evening, at a quarter to twelve. It was now a quarter past ten.

Max had not a moment to lose, he sped through the town, and at twenty-five minutes past ten, as the assembly was about to break up, he scaled the tribune.

"Not in a month, my friends," he cried, "not even in a week, must you expect the danger! But in an hour this awful catastrophe, a rain of iron and fire, will burst upon your town. An engine, worthy the invention of a fiend, which will carry thirty miles, is at this very moment pointed against us. I have seen it. Let the women and children seek shelter in the deepest and strongest cellars, or let them instantly leave the town, and take refuge in the mountains. All the men must prepare to combat the fire by every possible means. Fire will for the time be your only enemy. Neither armies nor soldiers will march against you. The adversary who menaces you disdains all ordinary modes of attack. If the plans and calculations of a man, whose power for evil is well known to you, are realised—unless Herr Schultz is mistaken for the first time in his life—fire will suddenly break out in at least a hundred places all over Frankville. We shall presently have to face the flames at a hundred different points! Whatever happens, the population must be saved first; such of your houses and monuments which cannot be preserved, or even the whole town, time and money can restore!"

In Europe, Max would have been thought mad. But in America it is not wise to refuse to believe in any miracle of science, however unexpected; so, by Dr. Sarrasin's advice, the young engineer was listened to and believed in.

The crowd, awed as much by the accent and appearance of the speaker as by his words, obeyed, without even dreaming of disputing his commands. The doctor answered for Max Bruckmann, and that was enough.

Orders were immediately given, and messengers sent out in every direction.

As to the inhabitants, some withdrew to the cellars of their dwellings, resigned to suffer all the horrors of a bombardment, others on foot, horseback, or in carriages, hastened out into the country, and ascended the steeps of the Cascade Mountains. In the meantime the able-bodied men collected in the square, and in different places pointed out by the doctor, everything that would serve to subdue fire, that is to say, water, earth, and sand.

In the Hall the deliberation continued.

Max was evidently beset by some idea which filled his brain to the exclusion of every other thought. He muttered to himself:

"At a quarter to twelve! Is it really possible that that villainous Schultz will destroy us with his execrable invention?"

Suddenly Max drew out his pocket-book. He made a gesture requiring silence, and then, pencil in hand, rapidly put down several figures on one of the pages. As he did so his brow cleared, his face became radiant.

"Ah! my friends!" he exclaimed, "my friends! Either these figures are liars, or else all that we fear will vanish like a nightmare before the evidence of a problem in the science of projectiles, the solution of which I have till this moment sought in vain. Herr Schultz is mistaken! The threatened danger is but a dream. For once, his science is at fault! Nothing of what he foretold will come to pass. It's impossible! His formidable shell will fly over Frankville without touching it, and if there is anything to fear, it will be only in the future!"

What could Max mean? His friends did not understand!

The young Alsatian then explained the result of his calculations.

In his clear ringing voice he explained his demonstration in such a way as to render it luminous, even to the most ignorant. It was light succeeding darkness, calm following agony. Not only would the projectile leave untouched the doctor's city, but it would touch nothing whatever. It was destined to lose itself in space!

Doctor Sarrasin acknowledged the correctness of Max's calculations, and then, pointing to the luminous dial in the hall—

"In three minutes," he exclaimed, "we shall know whether Schultz or Max Bruckmann is right! Whatever happens, my friends, we need not regret any of the precautions we have taken, and we still must neglect nothing which can baffle the inventions of our enemy. If his design fails for the present, as Max has just given us reason to hope, it won't be the last. Schultz's hate will never be stifled or arrested!"

"Come!" exclaimed Max.

All followed him into the square. Three minutes passed in breathless suspense. The quarter before twelve was tolled forth from the great clock!

Four seconds after, a dark mass was seen high above their

heads; quick as thought it rushed onwards, and with a sinister hiss soon disappeared far beyond the town.

"A pleasant journey to it!" shouted Max, with a burst of laughter. "If Herr Schultz's shell keeps up that speed, it will never again fall upon terrestrial soil!"

In two minutes a roar was heard like distant thunder. This was the report of the cannon in the Bull Tower, the sound reaching Frankville a hundred and thirteen seconds after the projectile had passed at the rate of four hundred and fifty miles an hour.

"Max Bruckmann, to Professor Schultz, of Stahlstadt.

"Frankville, September 14th.

"I consider it proper to inform the King of Steel, that on the evening of the day before yesterday, I succeeded in passing beyond the frontier of his dominion, preferring my own safety to that of the model in the blazing workshop.

"While taking leave, I should fail in my bounden duty were I not in turn to reveal my secrets. Do not, however, be uneasy on that account, I shall not require you to pay for the knowledge with your life.

"My real name is not Schwartz, and I am not a Swiss. Alsace is my country, and I am called Max Bruckmann.

"I am a tolerable engineer, if one may take your word for it; but first and foremost, I am a Frenchman. You have shown yourself the implacable enemy of my country, my friends, and my family. You have entertained odious designs against everything I hold most dear. I have dared, and done, all in order to discover those designs; I will dare and do all to frustrate them.

"I hasten to let you know that your first shot has failed to take effect.

"It has not hit the mark, for, thank heaven, it could not. Your gun is not the less a wonderful one, though the projectiles which it sends forth will never do any harm to any one! They will fall nowhere. I had a presentiment of this, and, to your great glory, it is now an established fact, that Herr Schultz has invented a wonderful cannon, entirely inoffensive.

"You will hear with pleasure that we saw your perfect shell, at forty-five minutes and four seconds past eleven, pass above our town. It was flying towards the west, circulating in space, which it will continue to do until the end of time. A projectile, animated

with an initial speed twenty times superior to the actual speed, being ten thousand yards to the second, can never fall! This movement, combined with terrestrial attraction, destines it to revolve perpetually round our globe.

"You ought to have been aware of this.

"I hope and expect that the cannon in the Bull Tower is quite spoilt by this first trial; but two hundred thousand dollars is not too much to have paid for the pleasure of having endowed the planetary world with a new star, and the earth with a second satellite.

"MAX BRUCKMANN."

In the light of the plans now being made for launching an artificial satellite, this narration has a special interest. It illustrates not only Verne's far-sightedness but also the technical limitations of his time; for, as in From the Earth to the Moon, the results that he envisages as accomplished by a monster cannon could be achieved only by rockets. Here, too, his calculations, like those of the mathematician F. T. Maston in The Purchase of the North Pole, are at fault; his projectile would need a muzzle velocity of 450 miles not per hour but per minute! (The "escape velocity" of a projectile leaving earth is seven feet per second and allowance must be made for the resistance of the air.)

The Petrified Professor

Further attacks on Frankville are threatened, but they do not materialise, and at last an astonished world learns that Stahlstad has ceased production and suspended payment, and that Herr Schultz has mysteriously vanished. Accompanied by a friend, Max visits the city and in the face of armed resistance reaches its sanctum.

The top of the steel ladder was fixed close to the wall of a vast circular chamber, there being no communication with the exterior. It would have been in complete darkness had it not been for a dazzling white light which streamed through the thick glass of a bull's-eye, fixed in the centre of the oak floor. For purity and brilliancy it might be compared to the moon, when she is in her full beauty.

Perfect silence reigned within these mute and eyeless walls.

The two young men imagined themselves in the antechamber of a tomb.

But before bending over the glass, Max hesitated for a moment. He had attained his object! The secret, to penetrate which he had come to Stahlstadt, was about to be revealed to him!

This feeling, however, soon passed off. Together he and Otto knelt beside the disc and looked down into the chamber beneath.

A horrible and unexpected sight met their astonished gaze.

The glass disc, being convex on both sides, formed a lens, which immensely increased in size all objects seen through it.

Here was the secret laboratory of Herr Schultz. The intense glare which shone through the disc, as if from the lantern of a lighthouse, came from a double electric lamp, still burning in its airless bell, being incessantly fed by a powerful voltaic pile.

In the middle of the room, motionless as marble, and enormously magnified by the refraction of the lens, a human form was seated.

Pieces and splinters of shells were strewn on the ground around this spectre.

There was no doubt about it! It was Herr Schultz himself, recognisable by his horrid grinning mouth, and his gleaming teeth; but a gigantic Herr Schultz, suffocated and frozen by the action of a terrible cold, caused by the explosion of one of his frightful engines of warfare.

The King of Steel was seated at his table, holding an enormous pen like a lance in his hand, as if he were writing. Had it not been for the stony glare of his dilated eyeballs, and his set mouth, he would have appeared still living. Here this awful corpse had been for a month, hidden from all eyes, and now discovered like a mammoth which has been concealed for ages in the glaciers of the Polar regions. Everything around him was frozen, the reagents in their jars, the water in its receivers, and the mercury in its reservoirs!

In spite of the horror of this spectacle, Max's first thought was one of satisfaction that they had been fortunate enough to be able to observe the interior of the laboratory from the outside, for if he and Otto had entered they must infallibly have been struck dead.

Max soon guessed how the fearful accident had occurred, when he marked that the fragments scattered on the ground were small pieces of glass. He knew that the inner case of Herr Schultz's

suffocating projectiles contained liquid carbonic acid, and that, to resist the enormous pressure, it was formed of tempered glass, which has ten or twelve times the ordinary strength; the great fault of this newly-invented production, however, is that, by some mysterious action, it often suddenly bursts without any apparent reason. This was evidently what had happened. Perhaps the interior pressure had helped to provoke the explosion of the shell deposited in the laboratory; at any rate, the discharged acid, on returning to a gaseous state, had occasioned a fearful lowering of the surrounding atmosphere, even to a hundred degrees below zero.

The effects had indeed been something awful. Death had surprised Herr Schultz in the attitude he was in at the time of the explosion, and in a moment he was turned into ice.

One circumstance which Max particularly noticed, was that at the time of his death the King of Steel was engaged in writing.

What was inscribed on the sheet of paper lying beneath that lifeless hand? It would be interesting to know the last thought, and read the last words of such a man.

The difficulty was to procure the paper. The idea of breaking the disc so as to descend into the laboratory could not be entertained for an instant. The gas would have immediately rushed out and suffocated every living being. The risk of bringing a sudden death upon themselves could not be run merely for the sake of satisfying their curiosity. Max, therefore, seeing that the writing as well as everything else was so wonderfully magnified and brilliantly illuminated, endeavoured to read it from a distance. Being well acquainted with the handwriting of Herr Schultz, with a little trouble he at last made out the following lines.

According to the usual custom of Herr Schultz, it was rather an order than an instruction.

"Order to B.K.R.Z. to advance the projected expedition against Frankville by a fortnight. As soon as this order is received execute the measures I have devised; they must this time be overwhelming and complete. Do not alter an iota of what I have decided upon. I wish that in a fortnight Frankville should become a city of the dead without a surviving inhabitant. I hope for a modern Pompeii, to be at once a terror and an astonishment to the whole world. If my orders are properly executed, this result will be inevitable.

"You will send the bodies of Doctor Sarrasin and Max Bruckmann to me. I wish to have them.

"SCHULT——."

The signature was unfinished, the final z and the usual flourish being wanting.

Max and Otto gazed mute and motionless at this strange spectacle, feeling as if they were witnessing the invocation of some malignant genius.

But it was time to leave the dismal scene, and the two friends, agitated by conflicting feelings, descended from the room above the laboratory.

There, in that dark tomb, for, when the electric current failed, the lamp would be extinguished, the corpse of the King of Steel would remain alone, dried up like a mummy Pharaoh, whom twenty centuries had not reduced to dust!

Luis P. Senarens (1865-1939) invented Frank Reade, Jr., the beloved boy inventor who was the true ancestor to Tom Swift. Writing under the pen name of "Noname," Senarens produced hundreds of novels about his teenage genius, who invented airplanes, helicopters, submarines, tanks, and robots on a precise weekly schedule for the great subliterate of America that flourished in the 19th century and is today known as "dime novel" reading. Called "The American Jules Verne," Luis Senarens corresponded and exchanged ideas with Verne. This particular excerpt from Frank Reade was published in the October 5, 1894, issue of the *Frank Reade Library* (and probably was serialized elsewhere earlier). It is a remarkable "worlds of if" conjecture as to how we might have conducted Indian battles if there had only been helicopters!

Frank Reade, Jr.'s, Air Wonder Fights the Klamath Indians

*from Frank Reade, Jr.'s, Search for a Lost
Man in His Latest Air Wonder*

BY LUIS P. SENARENS as "Noname"

The New Air-Ship

Readestown, nestling down among the hills, is one of the prettiest towns in the Union. It is not only pretty, but the home of the distinguished young inventor, whose fame is world-wide, Frank Reade, Jr.

And Readestown was proud of Frank Reade, Jr.

An exciting report had gone forth within a few days, and this was to the effect that the young genius was busy upon a new invention.

This was in the shape of an air-ship with which he proposed to accomplish a long and wonderful aerial journey.

The problem of navigation of the air had at length been solved by this production which as yet the world had not seen.

Everything was kept very secret about the Reade machine shops, and no outsiders were permitted to view the air-ship.

There were many good reasons why Frank was so strict about this.

A number of times dangerous cranks had endeavored to blow up or burn the shops, and several times they had nearly succeeded.

In order to guard against any such possibility all were barred. This Frank deemed the safest course.

In the young inventor's employ were two trusty men, one a negro as black as coal, who was called Pomp. The other was an Irishman named Barney O'Shea.

Barney and Pomp had accompanied Frank upon all his famous trips around the world. They were deeply devoted to their young master, who placed great dependence upon them.

They were genial, whole-souled fellows, and fond of pestering each other in a friendly way. They were ever up to some jolly lark or prank.

Barney was a skilled electrician and machinist, and Pomp was an experienced cook and mighty hunter. They were Frank's indispensable allies.

Upon the day upon which our story opens Readestown was all astir.

From far and near people had flocked to the town. It had the appearance of a gala day.

The truth was, the air-ship was upon the stocks in the big yard, all ready to make its flight.

A great store of provisions were aboard, and everything was in shipshape order.

All that was needed was the master hand at the electric keyboard.

Let us take a look at the wonderful air-ship as completed.

The Breeze, as it was called, was wonderfully constructed. First Frank had laid the lines of a stanch boat, and then built the hull of tough but thin aluminum.

This gave lightness and strength. There were bands of tough steel and small stays and thwarts of the same material to give it additional strength.

Beneath the hull was a framework with a set of four wheels.

This was so constructed that the Breeze could run upon the ground also if necessary.

So much for the hull of the air-ship.

The deck was composed of plates of aluminum, and in the center was one mast, which rose high in the air, and held a huge disc, over and above which were spokes connecting with a mighty revolving wheel or rotascope with huge blades of thin aluminum.

This revolving rotascope was possessed of tremendous power, and a few revolutions of it would send the Breeze instantly into higher altitude.

This constituted the elevating power of the air-ship.

The propelling force was vested in a huge propeller at the stern, the blades of which revolved swiftly.

Upon the bow of the Breeze was a ram of steel. An electric searchlight was arranged on the deck, so that a light could be thrown for full two miles.

This constitutes the exterior aspect of the air-ship. Now, with the reader's kind permission, we will take a look at the interior.

And here Frank's genius was most conspicuously shown.

The motive power of rotascope and propeller was furnished by a powerful set of electric engines.

These were of secret construction and the peculiar invention of Frank Reade, Jr.

The cabin of the Breeze was furnished richly, and there were appointments and equipments such as were suitable for a journey in wild countries.

With this altogether inadequate description of the wonderful air-ship, we will take the reader on to events which came in quick and thrilling order.

It was known that Frank Reade, Jr., with his air-ship, the Breeze, intended to take a trip of exploration through British North America.

There was a wonderful lake region extending even as far north as Alaska, which Frank believed would offer a wonderful field for adventure.

But little was known of this region save such reports as were obtained from wandering Klamath Indians, or a few straggling white fur hunters.

There were boundless forests of giant redwoods, even outstrip-

ping those of California, mighty chains of rivers and lakes, and game of all kinds.

It was true that the climate was severe in winter, the season of summer being short.

But Frank believed that there would be plenty of time for him with his air-ship to accomplish all that he wished.

Winnipeg Lake was crossed, and next came Little Winnipeg and Manitoba Lakes. Beyond these came the Saskatchewan and the true wilderness of the Northwest.

Hundreds of miles of unbroken forest extended in every direction.

Here Nature was seen in her primeval state, and rich in all her stores. But there was little signs of human life until one day upon the North Branch of the Saskatchewan a dingy little settlement was espied.

The air-ship hung over this, and it was duly inspected with glasses.

Perhaps a hundred frame shanties of various sizes were erected upon the bank of the river.

One structure of logs, evidently a fort, stood at a bend of the river.

Rough-looking men, miners and fur hunters, were thronged about the shanties. Myriad canoes lay upon the banks, or plied the river current.

"A genuine fur trading post!" declared Frank Reade, Jr.; "it may be a Hudson's Bay post, but I don't believe it. Let us ascertain."

"Shall we visit them?" asked Sharp.

"Yes."

"But——"

"What?"

"Perhaps they will not care to make our acquaintance. Do you remember our experience in Michigan?"

"I think we can bring them to terms," said Frank, grimly. "Down we go!"

The air-ship began to sink.

It was seen that the settlement below was in a state of great excitement. Armed men rushed about.

But still no shot was fired. Frank appeared at the rail with a white flag as a token of amity.

This seemed to allay their fears, and the fur hunters gathered in groups and watched the descent of the air-ship.

Frank did not venture to descend all the way.

Two hundred feet from the earth he threw out his anchors, and the air-ship remained motionless, with the rotascope slowly revolving.

Then the young inventor shouted:

"Hello, down there; I want to talk with you."

A tall, giant-framed man, with folded arms, stepped out of the crowd.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked.

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., an American," replied Frank.

"I thought ye was. What kind of a hurdy-gurdy have ye got thar?"

"This is the air-ship Breeze."

"Air-ship?"

"Yes."

"Wall, I'll be durned! I've heerd tell of balloons goin' up in ther air, but this ar' ther fust air-ship. Kin ye go anywhar ye please in that caboose?"

"Anywhere," replied Frank.

"That beats ther beavers! What is ther kentry comin' to next. Cum down, stranger, an' make yerself at home. This is Satan's Bend, a tradin' post for furs, an' I'm Bill Black, ther mayor."

"A trading post!" exclaimed Frank. "Are you of the Hudson's Bay Company?"

"Not by a durned sight. We are ther only community in British Columbia as ain't afraid of that grindin' monopoly, ther Hudson's Bay Company. They've tried to kill us out, but they kain't do it. We're all Yankees, an' too durned lively fer 'em. But cum down an' let's see what sort of a feller ye are."

"We are going to cultivate your acquaintance, Mr. Black," he cried. "I hope we will be friends."

"Yew bet we will, if yer a square trick!" cried Black. "I travel on the square myself, an' I'm glad to know ye."

Frank doubted his man no longer.

Down went the Breeze and rested upon the ground. Then the denizens of Satan's Bend crowded about.

The air-ship was a source of deep wonder to them, and they regarded it with amazement and interest. It was quite an event for the quiet little trading post of the Northwest.

Frank gripped hands with Bill Black, the mayor of Satan's Bend.

"Durned glad to meet ye," was the characteristic remark of that worthy. "Allus glad to meet a gentleman, even if I ain't one myself."

Frank laughed at this.

"I think we shall be friends," he said; "but one thing puzzles me."

"What's that?"

"How you manage to elude the Hudson's Bay Company, who claim to control all of this region."

Bill Black closed one eye.

"We don't try to elude them," he said.

"You don't?"

"No. They simply know better than to trouble us. They sent a gang of hoodlums up here once to try and do us up, but they didn't do it. We licked 'em out of their boots, an' they've let us alone ever since."

"Good enough!" laughed Frank.

"You see, it's hard for them to get an armed force in here to whip us. It would cost them more than the trouble would be worth. There's plenty of game in all this region for all of us. We know an' they know it, an' by ther beavers, we're goin' to have our share!"

Frank had begun to take a liking to Bill Black.

The mayor of Satan's Bend impressed him as a whole-souled, big-hearted fellow, who was above mean and petty tricks.

Some conversation was indulged in, and the mayor asked Frank into his cabin, where a nip of whiskey was taken.

"Wall," he said, "that's a peart lad. I hope thar don't none of them bloody Klamaths git you before yer gits ter Alaska."

"The Klamaths!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes."

"Are they on the warpath?"

"Went on last week, an' they've been raisin' Cain with all ther traps on ther Athabasky. Thar's been a number of scrimmages. It's two ter one ther Hudson's Bay people hev put them up tew it."

The Klamaths, as Frank well knew, were a treacherous, blood-thirsty tribe of Indians.

It is not at all unlikely that they might some time descend upon the settlement of Satan's Bend.

Such a contingency was not unlooked for, and fresh ammunition had been brought up from Winnipeg, to be all in readiness for such a thing.

The hunters fraternized kindly with the voyagers, and did all in their power to make it pleasant for them.

Hunting trips were planned, and many sorts of sports devised to kill time. Several days thus passed.

Early in the morning a party of hunters came hastily into camp.

They came from down the river, and brought a thrilling report.

This was that a large body of Klamaths fully two thousand strong, were coming down upon the settlement to literally annihilate it.

"They are led by a white renegade," reported one of the hunters, "an' he's hired an' paid by ther Hudson's Bay Company."

Of course the little settlement was thrown into a state of intense excitement.

Bill Black came to Frank Reade, Jr., with lengthened features, and said:

"By bufflers, it looks bad fer us, Mr. Reade! Thar's enuff in thet gang to bust us up!"

"Don't lose courage," said Frank, encouragingly. "You are not whipped yet."

"Yew bet we ain't!" cried the bluff saloon keeper. "We'll all die with our boots on!"

Every hour fresh reports came in of the advance of the Klamaths.

They seemed to be coming in all directions. Some were coming up the river in canoes and others through the deep forest.

The settlement was surrounded.

There was nothing to do but to await the attack of the savages, and if possible repulse it.

The hunters were all massed at the fort. Spies were out in the woods, and every precaution against a surprise was taken.

It soon became evident that the Klamaths would come up by noon. Already skirmishing shots were heard in the woods.

Bill Black was perhaps the most agitated of all.

Already he saw his trading post reduced to ashes and most of the denizens slaughtered.

But he said grimly:

"We'll give 'em a hard fight, an' don't yew forgit it. We'll all die hard."

Battle with the Klamaths

Frank Reade, Jr., had made little talk and had kept quietly aboard the Breeze. But he had not been idle.

He had caused Barney and Pomp to place all portable articles in the cabin, and draw the steel shutters at all the windows.

The loopholes in the hull of the air-ship were opened, and rifles were placed at each, with many rounds of cartridges.

Thus the Breeze was fully equipped for battle.

For Frank intended to take an active part in the strife.

He did not intend to go back on his new-made friends of Satan's Bend.

The scattered shots in the woods soon became a concentrated fire.

The line of hunters made a most stubborn resistance, but sheer weight of numbers drove them steadily back to the shelter of the fort.

One or two of the shanties in the outskirts of the settlement were fired. Then the red foe massed for an attack upon the fort.

Frank felt that the time for action had come.

He was the first to open fire from the air-ship's deck. The Breeze occupied a point at right angles with the fort and the forest, and allowed an enfilading fire upon the attacking force.

The Klamaths hovered yet in the verge of the forest.

But whenever a tufted head was seen it was fired upon.

Thus the battle opened.

As all the rifles of the air-ship's party were repeaters, a steady and terrific fire could be kept up.

The Klamaths, however, were in such large numbers that this could scarcely hold them at bay very long.

Suddenly they advanced to the charge.

Out of the woods they came with wild yells, and straight for the fort they went.

It was a critical moment.

The defenders of the fort fired as rapidly as they could, sending volley after volley into the foe.

but first and foremost, I am a Frenchman. You have shown your-

But it did not check them.

On they came more furiously than ever.

"Begorra, the devil wudn't howld thim back!" cried Barney, who had been firing as fast as he could work his repeater. "Phwat the devil will we do?"

"Golly, dey am almost ober the palisades now!" cried Pomp.

This was true enough. The Klamaths swarmed to the very stockade. Victory seemed theirs.

Frank dropped his rifle and sprang into the pilot-house.

He pressed a spring which slipped the anchors and then started the rotascope.

The air-ship rose a dozen feet from the ground and rushed like a huge bird straight for the Klamaths.

The act had a startling effect on the savages.

They were aghast at such a spectacle, and those who witnessed it became instantly convinced that an evil spirit was swooping down upon them.

Superstitious fears ruled for the moment, and at once the Indian lines were in tumultuous confusion.

Back they fled before this mysterious flying wonder which they could not understand.

Back into the forest, and the red foe had suffered a repulse.

The air-ship again settled down by the fort, and a mighty cheer went up from the hunters.

It was an opportune and shrewd move on Frank's part.

Filled with superstitious fear the Klamaths lingered in the shadow of the woods and fired in a desultory way at the fort.

They could not understand the nature of this mysterious flying machine, and were inclined to attribute to it divine powers.

But in their party were white men who comprehended the nature of the air-ship and proceeded to explain it to the savages.

The result was that the Indians gained fresh courage; their superstition was allayed and they were ready to return to the attack.

Again the battle began.

Once more the Klamaths came out of the woods to the attack. Frank sailed the air-ship over their heads, but it did not check them this time.

They fired volleys at the air-ship, the bullets rattling against the hull. But no harm was done.

On to the fort rushed the savages.

It seemed certain that they intended to carry it this time.

Frank placed his hand upon a box in the pilot-house. It contained the deadly electric bombs.

It was in his mind to use them and blow the savages to perdition.

But it would make such hideous slaughter that he hesitated to do it.

He was ever averse to human slaughter.

And yet it looked as if he would be compelled to do it.

But at this juncture a happy thought struck him. He at once acted upon it.

It was possible to so heavily charge a number of wires that contact with them would prostrate a man.

Frank quickly arranged a number of these so that they fell over the rail of the air-ship and hung for twenty or thirty feet.

Then he charged the wires and lowered the air-ship so that they trailed upon the ground.

Right over the body of Klamaths the air-ship passed.

Bullets by hundreds flattened themselves against the air-ship's hull. But now the air-ship was right over the mass of savages.

The scene which followed baffles adequate description.

The electric wires prostrated the savages by hundreds.

It did not kill, but stunned and terrified them. The effect was most successful.

They were unable to understand the mysterious force which was so powerful and which they could not see.

A panic seized them, and bodily they broke and fled.

Cheers pealed from the lips of the victorious hunters.

It was a grand victory; another successful repulse.

The air-ship was winning the day for Satan's Bend.

The savages retired to the shadows of the forest once more, and a desultory fire was kept up.

The air-ship settled down by the stockade, and Bill Black came out and hailed Frank.

"By beavers! yew are a dandy!" he cried. "If it hadn't been fer yew we'd all been up Salt river afore this!"

"What do you think?" asked Frank. "Will they not draw off now?"

"What, an' leave us alone?"

"Yes."

"Nawl Yew don't know ther Klamaths. They're wuss nor ther

itch fer hangin' on. I don't believe they'd give up till we've whittled 'em all to pieces!"

"Is that so?"

"Jes' so!"

"Well, then, you think we had better take extreme measures?"

"I dew; an' they kain't be too much so."

"That settles it," declared Frank. "I will do so."

"What's more, it's comin' on dark, an' they'll have ther best of us arter that."

"Well, then, we'll settle the matter at once," said Frank.

"Kin we do it?"

"Do it!" exclaimed the young inventor; "in the very easiest way. You shall see."

"Bully fer yew an' yer air-ship. Yew kin bet Satan's Bend will never forget Frank Reade, Jr.!"

"I think we will have a decisive talk with the Klamaths now," said Frank. "It is the best and only way to terminate this affair."

At this moment Bill Black cried:

"Heighol Hyar cums a truce!"

It was true that one of the savages was advancing from the forest with a white flag.

He came up within speaking distance, and Black said:

"Talk with him, Mr. Reade. See what he has to say."

"White man talk with Injun?" asked the truce-bearer.

"Yes," replied Frank. "What do you want?"

"Me come from big chief, Long Arrow. He say white men surrender, no get killed. Jest leave Injun's hunting ground."

"Oh, you want us to surrender, do you?"

"Yes."

"Well, you go back to your chief, Long Arrow, and tell him that if he does not get out of this locality within half an hour I'll blow him and the whole lot of you into pieces. Do you hear?"

"Then white man no surrender?"

"No!"

"White men all die!" warned the savage. "Long Arrow says so."

Back went the red truce-bearer.

A yell of derision and defiance went up from the savages as they listened to Frank's reply.

At once bullets began to fly.

The young inventor smiled grimly.

"We'll see!" he said.

He brought out a case of bombs and placed them by the rail. Then he said to Barney:

"Send the ship up five hundred feet."

"All roight, sor."

Up went the Breeze until it was right over the body of Klamaths in the forest below.

Then Frank picked up a bomb, and going to the rail, held it suspended for a moment.

Then he let it drop.

Down it fell and into the midst of the savage crew.

There was a terrific earthquake-like shock and explosion. Then up into the air rose a heap of debris, shattered trees, stones, earth, and the fragments of a score of mangled bodies.

A literal mound many feet high was raised in the verge of the forest.

Then Frank dropped another and another of the terrible destroyers.

Flesh and blood could not endure against such dreadful destructive force.

The terrified Klamaths broke and fled.

And as they spread through the wild forest the deadly bombs were at their heels.

Coming from the air in such a fashion, nothing could cope with such a destroying force. The savages were dispersed completely, and the attack upon Satan's Bend had proved an ignominious defeat.

While Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) was literally teetering on the abyss of starvation in his later days (his food budget was 30 cents a day), he was ironically acknowledged as a master of fantasy and horror even in his lifetime, a judgment which has been sustained by critical evaluation since his death. Possessing a completely non-mystical outlook, he scored his greatest successes by offering a logical scientific basis for his stories of horror. "The Whisperer in Darkness" is most typical of this phase of his writing, eschewing supernatural explanations for phenomena we cannot easily explain.

The Whisperer in Darkness

BY H. P. LOVECRAFT

Bear in mind closely that I did not see any actual visual horror at the end. To say that a mental shock was the cause of what I inferred—that last straw which sent me racing out of the lonely Akeley farmhouse and through the wild domed hills of Vermont in a commandeered motor at night—is to ignore the plainest facts of my final experience. Notwithstanding the deep things I saw and heard, and the admitted vividness of the impression produced on me by these things, I cannot prove even now whether I was right or wrong in my hideous inference. For after all, Akeley's disappearance establishes nothing. People found nothing amiss in his house despite the bullet-marks on the outside and inside. It was just as though he had walked out casually for a ramble in the hills and failed to return. There was not even a sign that a guest had been there, or that those horrible cylinders and machines had been stored in the study. That he had mortally feared the crowded green hills and endless trickle of books among which he had been born and reared, means nothing at all, either; for thousands are subject to just such morbid fears. Eccentricity, moreover, could easily account for his strange acts and apprehensions toward the last.

The whole matter began, so far as I am concerned, with the historic and unprecedented Vermont floods of November 3, 1927. I was then, as now, an instructor of literature at Miskatonic University in Arkham, Massachusetts, and an enthusiastic amateur student of New England folklore. Shortly after the flood, amidst the varied reports of hardship, suffering, and organized relief which filled the press, there appeared certain odd stories of things found floating in some of the swollen rivers; so that many of my friends embarked on curious discussions and appealed to me to shed what light I could on the subject. I felt flattered at having my folklore study taken so seriously, and did what I could to belittle the wild, vague tales which seemed so clearly an outgrowth of old rustic superstitions. It amused me to find several persons of education who insisted that some stratum of obscure, distorted fact might underlie the rumors.

The tales thus brought to my notice came mostly through newspaper cuttings; though one yarn had an oral source and was repeated to a friend of mine in a letter from his mother in Hardwick, Vermont. The type of thing described was essentially the same in all cases, though there seemed to be three separate instances involved—one connected with the Winooski River near Montpelier, another attached to the West River in Windham County beyond Newfane, and a third centering in the Passumpsic in Caledonia County above Lyndonville. Of course many of the stray items mentioned other instances, but on analysis they all seemed to boil down to these three. In each case country folk reported seeing one or more very bizarre and disturbing objects in the surging waters that poured down from the unfrequented hills, and there was a widespread tendency to connect these sights with a primitive, half-forgotten cycle of whispered legend which old people resurrected for the occasion.

What people thought they saw were organic shapes not quite like any they had ever seen before. Naturally, there were many human bodies washed along by the streams in that tragic period; but those who described these strange shapes felt quite sure that they were not human, despite some superficial resemblances in size and general outline. Nor, said the witnesses, could they have been any kind of animal known to Vermont. They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membranous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered

with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be. It was really remarkable how closely the reports from different sources tended to coincide; though the wonder was lessened by the fact that the old legends, shared at one time throughout the hill country, furnished a morbidly vivid picture which might well have coloured the imaginations of all the witnesses concerned. It was my conclusion that such witnesses—in every case naïve and simple backwoods folk—had glimpsed the battered and bloated bodies of human beings or farm animals in the whirling currents; and had allowed the half-remembered folklore to invest these pitiful objects with fantastic attributes.

The ancient folklore, while cloudy, evasive, and largely forgotten by the present generation, was of a highly singular character, and obviously reflected the influence of still earlier Indian tales. I knew it well, though I had never been in Vermont, through the exceedingly rare monograph of Eli Davenport, which embraces material orally obtained prior to 1839 among the oldest people of the state. This material, moreover, closely coincided with tales which I had personally heard from elderly rustics in the mountains of New Hampshire. Briefly summarized, it hinted at a hidden race of monstrous beings which lurked somewhere among the remoter hills—in the deep woods of the highest peaks, and the dark valleys where streams trickle from unknown sources. These beings were seldom glimpsed, but evidences of their presence were reported by those who had ventured farther than usual up the slopes of certain mountains or into certain deep, steep-sided gorges that even the wolves shunned.

There were queer footprints or claw-prints in the mud of brook-margins and barren patches, and curious circles of stones, with the grass around them worn away, which did not seem to have been placed or entirely shaped by Nature. There were, too, certain caves of problematical depth in the sides of the hills; with mouths closed by boulders in a manner scarcely accidental, and with more than an average quota of the queer prints leading both toward and away from them—if indeed the direction of these prints could be justly estimated. And worst of all, there were the things which adventurous people had seen very rarely in the twilight of the remotest valleys and the dense perpendicular woods above the limits of normal hill-climbing.

It would have been less uncomfortable if the stray accounts of these things had not agreed so well. As it was, nearly all the

rumors had several points in common; averring that the creatures were a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great batlike wings in the middle of the back. They sometimes walked on all their legs, and sometimes on the hindmost pair only, using the others to convey large objects of indeterminate nature. On one occasion they were spied in considerable numbers, a detachment of them wading along a shallow woodland watercourse three abreast in evidently disciplined formation. Once a specimen was seeing flying—launching itself from the top of a bald, lonely hill at night and vanishing in the sky after its great flapping wings had been silhouetted an instant against the full moon.

These things seemed content, on the whole, to let mankind alone; though they were at times held responsible for the disappearance of venturesome individuals—especially persons who built houses too close to certain valleys or too high up on certain mountains. Many localities came to be known as inadvisable to settle in, the feeling persisting long after the cause was forgotten. People would look up at some of the neighbouring mountain-precipices with a shudder, even when not recalling how many settlers had been lost, and how many farmhouses burnt to ashes, on the lower slopes of those grim, green sentinels.

But while according to the earliest legends the creatures would appear to have harmed only those trespassing on their privacy; there were later accounts of their curiosity respecting men, and of their attempts to establish secret outposts in the human world. There were tales of the queer claw-prints seen around farmhouse windows in the morning, and of occasional disappearances in regions outside the obviously haunted areas. Tales, besides, of buzzing voices in imitation of human speech which made surprising offers to lone travelers on roads and cart-paths in the deep woods, and of children frightened out of their wits by things seen or heard where the primal forest pressed close upon their door-yards. In the final layer of legends—the layer just preceding the decline of superstition and the abandonment of close contact with the dreaded places—there are shocked references to hermits and remote farmers who at some period of life appeared to have undergone a repellent mental change, and who were shunned and whispered about as mortals who had sold themselves to the strange beings. In one of the northeastern countries it seemed to be a fashion about 1800 to accuse eccentric and unpopular re-

cluses of being allies or representatives of the abhorred things.

As to what the things were—explanations naturally varied. The common name applied to them was "those ones," or "the old ones," though other terms had a local and transient use. Perhaps the bulk of the Puritan settlers set them down bluntly as familiars of the devil, and made them a basis of awed theological speculation. Those with Celtic legendry in their heritage—mainly the Scotch-Irish element of New Hampshire, and their kindred who had settled in Vermont on Governor Wentworth's colonial grants—linked them vaguely with the malign fairies and "little people" of the bogs and raths, and protected themselves with scraps of incantation handed down through many generations. But the Indians had the most fantastic theories of all. While different tribal legends differed, there was a marked consensus of belief in certain vital particulars; it being unanimously agreed that the creatures were not native to this earth.

The Pennacook myths, which were the most consistent and picturesque, taught that the Winged Ones came from the Great Bear in the sky, and had mines in our earthly hills whence they took a kind of stone they could not get on any other world. They did not live here, said the myths, but merely maintained outposts and flew back with vast cargoes of stone to their own stars in the north. They harmed only those earth-people who got too near them or spied upon them. Animals shunned them through instinctive hatred, not because of being hunted. They could not eat the things and animals of earth, but brought their own food from the stars. It was bad to get near them, and sometimes young hunters who went into their hills never came back. It was not good, either, to listen to what they whispered at night in the forest with voices like a bee's that tried to be like the voices of men. They knew the speech of all kinds of men—Pennacooks, Hurons, men of the Five Nations—but did not seem to have or need any speech of their own. They talked with their heads, which changed colour in different ways to mean different things.

All the legendry, of course, white and Indian alike, died down during the nineteenth century, except for occasional atavistical flareups. The ways of the Vermonters became settled; and once their habitual paths and dwellings were established according to a certain fixed plan, they remembered less and less what fears and avoidances had determined that plan, and even that there had been any fears or avoidances. Most people simply knew that

certain hilly regions were considered as highly unhealthy, unprofitable, and generally unlucky to live in, and that the farther one kept from them the better off one usually was. In time the ruts of custom and economic interest became so deeply cut in approved places that there was no longer any reason for going outside them, and the haunted hills were left deserted by accident rather than by design. Save during infrequent local scares, only wonder-loving grandmothers and retrospective nonagenarians ever whispered of beings dwelling in those hills; and even such whisperers admitted that there was not much to fear from those things now that they were used to the presence of houses and settlements, and now that human beings let their chosen territory severely alone.

All this I had long known from my reading, and from certain folk tales picked up in New Yampshire; hence when the flood-time rumours began to appear, I could easily guess what imaginative background had evolved them. I took great pains to explain this to my friends, and was correspondingly amused when several contentious souls continued to insist on a possible element of truth in the reports. Such persons tried to point out that the early legends had a significant persistence and uniformity, and that the virtually unexplored nature of the Vermont hills made it unwise to be dogmatic about what might or might not dwell among them; nor could they be silenced by my assurance that all the myths were of a well-known pattern common to most of mankind and determined by early phases of imaginative experience which always produced the same type of delusion.

It was of no use to demonstrate to such opponents that the Vermont myths differed but little in essence from those universal legends of natural personification which filled the ancient world with fauns and dryads and satyrs, suggested the *kallikanzarai* of modern Greece, and gave to wild Wales and Ireland their dark hints of strange, small, and terrible hidden races of troglodytes and burrowers. No use, either, to point out the even more startlingly similar belief of the Nepalese hill tribes in the dreaded *Mi-Go* or "Abominable Snow-Men" who lurk hideously amidst the ice and rock pinnacles of the Himalayan summits. When I brought up this evidence, my opponents turned it against me by claiming that it must imply some actual historicity for the ancient tales; that it must argue the real existence of some queer elder earth-race, driven to hiding after the advent and dominance of

mankind, which might very conceivably have survived in reduced numbers to relatively recent times—or even to the present.

The more I laughed at such theories, the more these stubborn friends asseverated them; adding that even without the heritage of legend the recent reports were too clear, consistent, detailed, and sanely prosaic in manner of telling, to be completely ignored. Two or three fanatical extremists went so far as to hint at possible meanings in the ancient Indian tales which gave the hidden beings a nonterrestrial origin; citing the extravagant books of Charles Fort with their claims that voyagers from other worlds and outer space have often visited the earth. Most of my foes, however, were merely romanticists who insisted on trying to transfer to real life the fantastic lore of lurking "little people" made popular by the magnificent horror-fiction of Arthur Machen.

As was only natural under the circumstances, this piquant debating finally got into print in the form of letters to the *Arkham Advertiser*; some of which were copied in the press of those Vermont regions whence the flood-stories came. The *Rutland Herald* gave half a page of extracts from the letters on both sides, while the *Brattleboro Reformer* reprinted one of my long historical and mythological summaries in full, with some accompanying comments in "The Pendrifter's" thoughtful column which supported and applauded my skeptical conclusions. By the spring of 1928 I was almost a well-known figure in Vermont, notwithstanding the fact that I had never set foot in the state. Then came the challenging letters from Henry Akeley which impressed me so profoundly, and which took me for the first and last time to that fascinating realm of crowded green precipices and muttering forest streams.

Most of what I know of Henry Wentworth Akeley was gathered by correspondence with his neighbours, and with his only son in California, after my experience in his lonely farmhouse. He was, I discovered, the last representative on his home soil of a long, locally distinguished line of jurists, administrators, and gentlemen-agriculturists. In him, however, the family mentally had veered away from practical affairs to pure scholarship; so that he had been a notable student of mathematics, astronomy, biology, anthropology, and folklore at the University of Vermont. I had

never previously heard of him, and he did not give many autobiographical details in his communications; but from the first I saw he was a man of character, education, and intelligence, albeit a recluse with very little worldly sophistication.

Despite the incredible nature of what he claimed, I could not help at once taking Akeley more seriously than I had taken any of the other challengers of my views. For one thing, he was really close to the actual phenomena—visible and tangible—that he speculated so grotesquely about; and for another thing he was amazingly willing to leave his conclusions in a tentative state like a true man of science. He had no personal preferences to advance, and was always guided by what he took to be solid evidence. Of course I began by considering him mistaken, but gave him credit for being intelligently mistaken; and at no time did I emulate some of his friends in attributing his ideas, and his fear of the lonely green hills, to insanity. I could see that there was a great deal to the man, and knew that what he reported must surely come from strange circumstance deserving investigation, however little it might have to do with the fantastic causes he assigned. Later on I received from him certain material proofs which placed the matter on a somewhat different and bewilderingly bizarre basis.

I cannot do better than transcribe in full, so far as is possible, the long letter in which Akeley introduced himself, and which formed such an important landmark in my own intellectual history. It is no longer in my possession, but my memory holds almost every word of its portentous message; and again I affirm my confidence in the sanity of the man who wrote it. Here is the text—a text which reached me in the cramped, archaic-looking scrawl of one who had obviously not mingled much with the world during his sedate, scholarly life.

R.F.D. #2,
Townshend, Windham Co., Vermont.
May 5, 1928

ALBERT N. WILMARTH, ESQ.,
118 SALTONSTALL ST.,
ARKHAM, MASS.

My Dear Sir:—

I have read with great interest the *Brattleboro Reformer's* reprint (Apr. 23, '28) of your letter on the recent stories of strange

bodies seen floating in our flooded streams last fall, and on the curious folklore they so well agree with. It is easy to see why an outlander would take the position you take, and even why "Pendrifter" agrees with you. That is the attitude generally taken by educated persons both in and out of Vermont, and was my own attitude as a young man (I am now 57) before my studies, both general and in Davenport's book, led me to do some exploring in parts of the hills hereabouts not usually visited.

I was directed toward such studies by the queer old tales I used to hear from elderly farmers of the more ignorant sort, but now I wish I had let the whole matter alone. I might say, with all proper modesty, that the subject of anthropology and folklore is by no means strange to me. I took a good deal of it at college, and am familiar with most of the standard authorities such as Tylor, Lubbock, Frazer, Quatrefages, Murray, Osborn, Keith, Boule, G. Elliott Smith, and so on. It is no news to me that tales of hidden races are as old as all mankind. I have seen the reprints of letters from you, and those agreeing with you, in the *Rutland Herald*, and guess I know about where your controversy stands at the present time.

What I desire to say now is, that I am afraid your adversaries are nearer right than yourself, even though all reason seems to be on your side. They are nearer right than they realise themselves—for of course they go only by theory, and cannot know what I know. If I knew as little of the matter as they, I would feel justified in believing as they do. I would be wholly on your side.

You can see that I am having a hard time getting to the point, probably because I really dread getting to the point; but the upshot of the matter is that *I have certain evidence that monstrous things do indeed live in the woods on the high hills which nobody visits*. I have not seen any of the things floating in the rivers, as reported, *but I have seen things like them* under circumstances I dread to repeat. I have seen footprints, and of late have seen them nearer my own home (I live in the old Akeley place south of Townshend Village, on the side of Dark Mountain) than I dare tell you now. And I have overheard voices in the woods at certain points that I will not even begin to describe on paper.

At one place I heard them so much that I took a phonograph there—with a dictaphone attachment and was blank—and I shall try to arrange to have you hear the record I got. I have run it on

the machine for some of the old people up here, and one of the voices had nearly scared them paralysed by reason of its likeness to a certain voice (that buzzing voice in the woods which Davenport mentions) that their grandmothers have told about and mimicked for them. I know what most people think of a man who tells about "hearing voices"—but before you draw conclusions just listen to this record and ask some of the older backwoods people what they think of it. If you can account for it normally, very well; but there must be something behind it. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, you know.

Now my object in writing you is not to start an argument but to give you information which I think a man of your tastes will find deeply interesting. *This is private. Publicly I am on your side*, for certain things show me that it does not do for people to know too much about these matters. My own studies are now wholly private, and I would not think of saying anything to attract people's attention and cause them to visit the places I have explored. It is true—terribly true—that there are *non-human creatures watching us all the time*; with spies among us gathering information. It is from a wretched man who, if he was sane (as I think he was) *was one of those spies*, that I got a large part of my clues to the matter. He later killed himself, but I have reason to think there are others now.

The things come from another planet, being able to live in interstellar space and fly through it on clumsy, powerful wings which have a way of resisting the ether but which are too poor at steering to be of much use in helping them about on earth. I will tell you about this later if you do not dismiss me at once as a madman. They come here to get metals from mines that go deep under the hills, *and I think I know where they come from*. They will not hurt us if we let them alone, but no one can say what will happen if we get too curious about them. Of course a good army of men could wipe out their mining colony. That is what they are afraid of. But if that happened, more would come from *outside*—any number of them. They could easily conquer the earth, but have not tried so far because they have not needed to. They would rather leave things as they are to save bother.

I think they mean to get rid of me because of what I have discovered. There is a great black stone with unknown hieroglyphics half worn away which I found in the woods on Round Hill, east of here; and after I took it home everything became

different. If they think I suspect too much they will either kill me *or take me off the earth to where they come from*. They like to take away men of learning once in a while, to keep informed on the state of things in the human world.

This leads me to my secondary purpose in addressing you—namely, to urge you to hush up the present debate rather than give it more publicity. *People must be kept away from these hills*, and in order to effect this, their curiosity ought not to be aroused any further. Heaven knows there is peril enough anyway, with promoters and real estate men flooding Vermont with herds of summer people to overrun the wild places and cover the hills with cheap bungalows.

I shall welcome further communication with you, and shall try to send you that phonograph record and black stone (which is so worn that photographs don't show much) by express if you are willing. I say "try" because I think those creatures have a way of tampering with things around here. There is a sullen furtive fellow named Brown, on a farm near the village, who I think is their spy. Little by little they are trying to cut me off from our world because I know too much about their world.

They have the most amazing way of finding out what I do. You may not even get this letter. I think I shall have to leave this part of the country and go live with my son in San Diego, Cal., if things get any worse, but it is not easy to give up the place you were born in, and where your family has lived for six generations. Also, I would hardly dare sell this house to anybody now that the *creatures* have taken notice of it. They seem to be trying to get the black stone back and destroy the phonograph record, but I shall not let them if I can help it. My great police dogs always hold them back, for there are very few here as yet, and they are clumsy in getting about. As I have said, their wings are not much use for short flights on earth. I am on the very brink of deciphering that stone—in a very terrible way—and with your knowledge of folklore you may be able to supply the missing links enough to help me. I suppose you know all about the fearful myths antedating the coming of man to the earth—the Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu cycles—which are hinted at in the *Necronomicon*. I had access to a copy of that once, and hear that you have one in your college library under lock and key.

To conclude, Mr. Wilmarth, I think that with your respective studies we can be very useful to each other. I don't wish to put

you in any peril, and suppose I ought to warn you that possession of the stone and the record won't be very safe; but I think you will find any risks worth running for the sake of knowledge. I will drive down to Newfane or Brattleboro to send whatever you authorize me to send, for the express offices there are more to be trusted. I might say that I live quite alone now, since I can't keep hired help any more. They won't stay because of the things that try to get near the house at night, and that keep the dogs barking continually. I am glad I didn't get as deep as this into the business while my wife was alive, for it would have driven her mad.

Hoping that I am not bothering you unduly, and that you will decide to get in touch with me rather than throw this letter into the waste basket as a madman's raving, I am

Yrs. very truly,
Henry W. Akeley

P.S. I am making some extra prints of certain photographs taken by me, which I think will help to prove a number of the points I have touched on. The old people think they are monstrously true. I shall send you these very soon if you are interested.

H. W. A.

It would be difficult to describe my sentiments upon reading this strange document for the first time. By all ordinary rules, I ought to have laughed more loudly at these extravagances than at the far milder theories which had previously moved me to mirth; yet something in the tone of the letter made me take it with paradoxical seriousness. Not that I believed for a moment in the hidden race from the stars which my correspondent spoke of; but that, after some grave preliminary doubts, I grew to feel oddly sure of his sanity and sincerity, and of his confrontation by some genuine though singular and abnormal phenomenon which he could not explain except in this imaginative way. It could not be as he thought it, I reflected, yet on the other hand it could not be otherwise than worthy of investigation. The man seemed unduly excited and alarmed about something, but it was hard to think that all cause was lacking. He was so specific and logical in certain ways—and after all, his yarn did fit in so perplexingly well with some of the old myths—even the wildest Indian legends.

That he had really overheard disturbing voices in the hills, and had really found the black stone he spoke about, was wholly

possible despite the crazy inferences he had made—inferences probably suggested by the man who had claimed to be a spy of the outer beings and had later killed himself. It was easy to deduce that this man must have been wholly insane, but that he probably had a streak of perverse outward logic which made the naïve Akeley—already prepared for such things by his folklore studies—believe his tale. As for the latest developments—it appeared from his inability to keep hired help that Akeley's humbler rustic neighbours were as convinced as he that his house was besieged by uncanny things at night. The dogs really barked, too.

And then the matter of that phonograph record, which I could not but believe he had obtained in the way he said. It must mean something; whether animal noises deceptively like human speech, or the speech of some hidden, night-haunting human being decayed to a state not much above that of lower animals. From this my thoughts went back to the black hieroglyphed stone, and to speculations upon what it might mean. Then, too, what of the photographs which Akeley said he was about to send, and which the old people had found so convincingly terrible?

As I re-read the cramped handwriting I felt as never before that my credulous opponents might have more on their side than I had conceded. After all, there might be some queer and perhaps hereditarily misshapen outcasts in those shunned hills, even though no such race of star-born monsters as folklore claimed. And if there were, then the presence of strange bodies in the flooded streams would not be wholly beyond belief. Was it too presumptuous to suppose that both the old legends and the recent reports had this much of reality behind them? But even as I harboured these doubts I felt ashamed that so fantastic a piece of bizarrerie as Henry Akeley's wild letter had brought them up.

In the end I answered Akeley's letter, adopting a tone of friendly interest and soliciting further particulars. His reply came almost by return mail; and contained, true to promise, a number of kodak views of scenes and objects illustrating what he had to tell. Glancing at these pictures as I took them from the envelope, I felt a curious sense of fright and nearness to forbidden things; for in spite of the vagueness of most of them, they had a damnable suggestive power which was intensified by the fact of their being genuine photographs—actual optical links with what they

portrayed, and the product of an impersonal transmitting process without prejudice, fallibility, or mendacity.

The more I looked at them, the more I saw that my serious estimate of Akeley and his story had not been unjustified. Certainly, these pictures carried conclusive evidence of something in the Vermont hills which was at least vastly outside the radius of our common knowledge and belief. The worst thing of all was the footprint—a view taken where the sun shone on a mud patch somewhere in a deserted upland. This was no cheaply counterfeited thing, I could see at a glance; for the sharply defined pebbles and grassblades in the field of vision gave a clear index of scale and left no possibility of a tricky double exposure. I have called the thing a "footprint," but "claw-print" would be a better term. Even now I can scarcely describe it save to say that it was hideously crablike, and that there seemed to be some ambiguity about its direction. It was not a very deep or fresh print, but seemed to be about the size of an average man's foot. From a central pad, pairs of saw-toothed nippers projected in opposite directions—quite baffling as to function, if indeed the whole object were exclusively an organ of locomotion.

Another photograph—evidently a time-exposure taken in deep shadow—was of the mouth of a woodland cave, with a boulder of rounded regularity choking the aperture. On the bare ground in front of it one could just discern a dense network of curious tracks, and when I studied the picture with a magnifier I felt uneasily sure that the tracks were like the one in the other view. A third picture showed a druid-like circle of standing stones on the summit of a wild hill. Around the cryptic circle the grass was very much beaten down and worn away, though I could not detect any footprints even with the glass. The extreme remoteness of the place was apparent from the veritable sea of tenantless mountains which formed the background and stretched away toward a misty horizon.

But if the most disturbing of all the views was that of the footprint, the most curiously suggestive was that of the great black stone found in the Round Hill woods. Akeley had photographed it on what was evidently his study table, for I could see rows of books and a bust of Milton in the background. The thing, as nearly as one might guess, had faced the camera vertically with a somewhat irregularly curved surface of one by two feet;

but to say anything definite about that surface, or about the general shape of the whole mass, almost defies the power of language. What outlandish geometrical principles had guided its cutting—for artificially cut it surely was—I could not even begin to guess; and never before had I seen anything which struck me as so strangely and unmistakably alien to this world. Of the hieroglyphics on the surface I could discern very few, but one or two that I did see gave rather a shock. Of course they might be fraudulent, for others besides myself had read the monstrous and abhorred *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred; but it nevertheless made me shiver to recognise certain ideographs which study had taught me to link with the most blood-curdling and blasphemous whispers of things that had had a kind of mad half-existence before the earth and the other inner worlds of the solar system were made.

Of the five remaining pictures, three were of swamp and hill scenes which seemed to bear traces of hidden and unwholesome tenancy. Another was of a queer mark in the ground very near Akeley's house, which he said he had photographed the morning after a night on which the dogs had barked more violently than usual. It was very blurred, and one could really draw no certain conclusions from it; but it did seem fiendishly like that other mark or claw-print photographed on the deserted upland. The final picture was of the Akeley place itself; a trim white house of two stories and attic, about a century and a quarter old, and with a well-kept lawn and stone-bordered path leading up to a tastefully carved Georgian doorway. There were several huge police dogs on the lawn, squatting near a pleasant-faced man with a close-cropped grey beard whom I took to be Akeley himself—his own photographer, one might infer from the tube-connected bulb in his right hand.

From the pictures I turned to the bulky, close-written letter itself; and for the next three hours was immersed in a gulf of unutterable horror. Where Akeley had given only outlines before, he now entered into minute details; presenting long transcripts of words overheard in the woods at night, long accounts of monstrous pinkish forms spied in thickets at twilight on the hills, and a terrible cosmic narrative derived from the application of profound and varied scholarship to the endless bygone discourses of the mad self-styled spy who had killed himself. I found myself faced by names and terms that I had heard elsewhere in the most

hideous of connections—Yuggoth, Great Cthulhu, Tsathoggua, Yog-Sothoth, R'lych, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, Hastur, Yian, Leng, the Lake of Hali, Bethmoora, the Yellow Sign, L'mur-Kathulos, Bran, and the Magnum Innominandum—and was drawn back through nameless aeons and inconceivable dimensions to worlds of elder, outer entity at which the crazed author of the *Necronomicon* had only guessed in the vaguest way. I was told of the pits of primal life, and of the streams that had trickled down therefrom; and finally, of the tiny rivulet from one of those streams which had become entangled with the destinies of our own earth.

My brain whirled; and where before I had attempted to explain things away, I now began to believe in the most abnormal and incredible wonders. The array of vital evidence was damnable vast and overwhelming; and the cool, scientific attitude of Akeley—an attitude removed as far as imaginable from the demented, the fanatical, the hysterical, or even the extravagantly speculative—had a tremendous effect on my thought and judgment. By the time I laid the frightful letter aside I could understand the fears he had come to entertain, and was ready to do anything in my power to keep people away from those wild, haunted hills. Even now, when time has dulled the impression and made me half-question my own experience and horrible doubts, there are things in that letter of Akeley's which I would not quote, or even form into words on paper. I am almost glad that the letter and record and photographs are gone now—and I wish, for reasons I shall soon make clear, that the new planet beyond Neptune had not been discovered.

With the reading of that letter my public debating about the Vermont horror permanently ended. Arguments from opponents remained unanswered or put off with promises, and eventually the controversy petered out into oblivion. During late May and June I was in constant correspondence with Akeley; though once in a while a letter would be lost, so that we would have to retrace our ground and perform considerable laborious copying. What we were trying to do, as a whole, was to compare notes in matters of obscure mythological scholarship and arrive at a clearer correlation of the Vermont horrors with the general body of primitive world legend.

For one thing, we virtually decided that these morbidities and the hellish Himalayan *Mi-Go* were one and the same order of

incarnated nightmare. There was also absorbing zoölogical conjectures, which I would have referred to Professor Dexter in my own college but for Akeley's imperative command to tell no one of the matter before us. If I seem to disobey that command now, it is only because I think that at this stage a warning about those farther Vermont hills—and about those Himalayan peaks which bold explorers are more and more determined to ascend—is more conducive to public safety than silence would be. One specific thing we were leading up to was a deciphering of the hieroglyphics on that infamous black stone—a deciphering which might well place us in possession of secrets deeper and more dizzying than any formerly known to man.

Toward the end of June the phonograph record came—shipped from Brattleboro, since Akeley was unwilling to trust conditions on the branch line north of there. He had begun to feel an increased sense of espionage, aggravated by the loss of some of our letters; and said much about the insidious deeds of certain men whom he considered tools and agents of the hidden beings. Most of all he suspected the surly farmer Walter Brown, who lived alone on a run-down hillside place near the deep woods, and who was often seen loafing around corners in Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Newfane, and South Londonderry in the most inexplicable and seemingly unmotivated way. Brown's voice, he felt convinced, was one of those he had overheard on a certain occasion in a very terrible conversation; and he had once found a footprint or claw-print near Brown's house which might possess the most ominous significance. It had been curiously near some of Brown's own footprints—footprints that faced toward it.

So the record was shipped from Brattleboro, whither Akeley drove in his Ford car along the lonely Vermont back roads. He confessed in an accompanying note that he was beginning to be afraid of those roads, and that he would not even go into Townshend for supplies now except in broad daylight. It did not pay, he repeated again and again, to know too much unless one were very remote from those silent and problematical hills. He would be going to California pretty soon to live with his son, though it was hard to leave a place where all one's memories and ancestral feelings centered.

Before trying the record on the commercial machine which I

borrowed from the college administration building I carefully went over all the explanatory matter in Akeley's various letters. This record, he had said, was obtained about 1 a.m. on the 1st of May, 1915, near the closed mouth of a cave where the wooded west slope of Dark Mountain rises out of Lee's swamp. The place had always been unusually plagued with strange voices, this being the reason he had brought the phonograph, dictaphone, and blank in expectation of results. Farmer experience had told him that May Eve—the hideous Sabbath-night of underground European legend—would probably be more fruitful than any other date, and he was not disappointed. It was noteworthy, though, that he never again heard voices at that particular spot.

Unlike most of the overhead forest voices, the substance of the record was quasi-ritualistic, and included one palpably human voice which Akeley had never been able to place. It was not Brown's, but seemed to be that of a man of greater cultivation. The second voice, however, was the real crux of the thing—for this was the accursed *buzzing* which had no likeness to humanity despite the human words which it uttered in good English grammar and a scholarly accent.

The recording phonograph and dictaphone had not worked uniformly well, and had of course been at a great disadvantage because of the remote and muffled nature of the overheard ritual; so that the actual speech secured was very fragmentary. Akeley had given me a transcript of what he believed the spoken words to be, and I glanced through this again as I prepared the machine for action. The text was darkly mysterious rather than openly horrible, though a knowledge of its origin and manner of gathering gave it all the associative horror which any words could well possess. I will present it here in full as I remember it—and I am fairly confident that I know it correctly by heart, not only from reading the transcript, but from playing the record itself over and over again. It is not a thing which one might readily forget!

(Indistinguishable Sounds)

(A Cultivated Male Human Voice)

. . . is the Lord of the Wood, even to . . . and the gifts of the men of Leng . . . so from the wells of night to the gulfs of space, and from the gulfs of space to the wells of night, ever the praises of Great Cthulhu, of Tsathoggua, and of Him Who is not

to be Named. Ever Their praises, and abundance to the Black Goat of the Woods. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young!

(A Buzzing Imitation of Human Speech)

Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!

(Human Voice)

And it has come to pass that the Lord of the Woods, being . . . seven and nine, down the onyx steps . . . (tri)butes to Him in the Gulf, Azathoth, He of Whom Thou has taught us marvels . . . on the wings of night out beyond space, out beyond the . . . to That whereof Yuggoth is the youngest child, rolling alone in black aether at the rim. . . .

(Buzzing Voice)

. . . go out among men and find the ways thereof, that He in the Gulf may know. To Nyarlathotep, Mighty Messenger, must all things be told. And He shall put on the semblance of men, the waxen mask and the robe that hides, and come down from the world of Seven Suns to mock. . . .

(Human Voice)

. . . (nyarl)athotep, Great Messenger, bringer of strange joy to Yuggoth through the void, Father of the Million Favoured Ones, Stalker among. . . .

(Speech Cut Off by End of Record)

Such were the words for which I was to listen when I started the phonograph. It was with a trace of genuine dread and reluctance that I pressed the lever and heard the preliminary scratching of the sapphire point, and I was glad that the first faint, fragmentary words were in a human voice—a mellow, educated voice which seemed vaguely Bostonian in accent, and which was

certainly not that of any native of the Vermont hills. As I listened to the tantalisingly feeble rendering, I seemed to find the speech identical with Akeley's carefully prepared transcript. On it chanted, in that mellow Bostonian voice . . . "Täl Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! . . ."

And then I heard *the other voice*. To this hour I shudder retrospectively when I think of how it struck me, prepared though I was by Akeley's accounts. Those to whom I have since described the record profess to find nothing but cheap imposture or madness in it; but *could they have the accursed thing itself*, or read the bulk of Akeley's correspondence, (especially that terrible and encyclopaedic second letter), I know they would think differently. It is, after all, a tremendous pity that I did not disobey Akeley and play the record for others—a tremendous pity, too, that all of his tetteres were lost. To me, with my first-hand impression of the actual sounds, and with my knowledge of the background and surrounding circumstances, the voice was a monstrous thing. It swiftly followed the human voice in ritualistic response, but in my imagination it was a morbid echo winging its ways across unimaginable abysses from unimaginable outer hells. It is more than two years now since I last ran off that blasphemous waxen cylinder; but at this moment, and at all other moments, I can still hear that feeble, fiendish buzzing as it reached me for the first time.

"Täl Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!"

But though that voice is always in my ears, I have not even yet been able to analyse it well enough for a graphic description. It was like the drone of some loathsome, gigantic insect ponderously shaped into the articulate speech of an alien species, and I am perfectly certain that the organs producing it can have no resemblance to the vocal organs of man, or indeed to those of any of the mammalia. There were singularities in timbre, range, and overtones which placed this phenomenon wholly outside the sphere of humanity and earth-life. Its sudden advent that first time almost stunned me, and I heard the rest of the record through in a sort of abstracted daze. When the longer passage of buzzing came, there was a sharp intensification of that feeling of blasphemous infinity which had struck me during the shorter and earlier passage. At last the record ended abruptly, during an un-

usually clear speech of the human and Bostonian voice; but I sat stupidly staring long after the machine had automatically stopped.

I hardly need say that I gave that shocking record many another playing, and that I made exhaustive attempts at analysis and comment in comparing notes with Akeley. It would be both useless and disturbing to repeat here all that we concluded; but I may hint that we agreed in believing we had secured a clue to the source of some of the most repulsive primordial customs in the cryptic elder religions of mankind. It seemed plain to us, also, that there were ancient and elaborate alliances between the hidden outer creatures and certain members of the human race. How extensive these alliances were, and how their state today might compare with their state in earlier ages, we had no means of guessing; yet at best there was room for a limitless amount of horrified speculation. There seemed to be an awful, immemorial linkage in several definite stages betwixt man and nameless infinity. The blasphemies which appeared on earth, it was hinted, came from the dark planet Yuggoth, at the rim of the solar system; but this was itself merely the populous outpost of a frightful interstellar race whose ultimate source must lie far outside even the Einsteinian space-time continuum or greatest known cosmos.

Meanwhile we continued to discuss the black stone and the best way of getting it to Arkham—Akeley deeming it inadvisable to have me visit him at the scene of his nightmare studies. For some reason or other, Akeley was afraid to trust the thing to any ordinary or expected transportation route. His final idea was to take it across country to Bellows Falls and ship it on the Boston and Maine system through Keene and Winchendon and Fitchburg, even though this would necessitate his driving along somewhat lonelier and more forest-traversing hill roads than the main highway to Brattleboro. He said he had noticed a man around the express office at Brattleboro when he had sent the phonograph record, whose actions and expression had been far from reassuring. This man had seemed too anxious to talk with the clerks, and had taken the train on which the record was shipped. Akeley confessed that he had not felt strictly at ease about that record until he heard from me of its safe receipt.

About this time—the second week in July—another letter of mine went astray, as I learned through an anxious communication

from Akeley. After that he told me to address him no more at Townshend, but to send all mail in care of the General Delivery at Brattleboro; whither he would make frequent trips either in his car or on the motorcoach line which had lately replaced passenger service on the lagging branch railway. I could see that he was getting more and more anxious, for he went into much detail about the increased barking of the dogs on moonless nights, and about the fresh claw-prints he sometimes found in the road and in the mud at the back of his farmyard when morning came. Once he told about a veritable army of prints drawn up in a line facing an equally thick and resolute line of dog-tracks, and sent a loathsomely disturbing kodak picture to prove it. That was after a night on which the dogs had outdone themselves in barking and howling.

On the morning of Wednesday, July 18, I received a telegram from Bellows Falls, in which Akeley said he was expressing the black stone over the B. & M. on Train No. 5508, leaving Bellows Falls at 12:15 p.m., standard time, and due at the North Station in Boston at 4:12 p.m. It ought, I calculated, to get up to Arkham at least by the next noon; and accordingly I stayed in all Thursday morning to receive it. But noon came and went without its advent, and when I telephoned down to the express office I was informed that no shipment for me had arrived. My next act, performed amidst a growing alarm, was to give a long-distance call to the express agent at the Boston North Station; and I was scarcely surprised to learn that my consignment had not appeared. Train No. 5508 had pulled in only 35 minutes late on the day before, but had contained no box addressed to me. The agent promised, however, to institute a searching inquiry; and I ended the day by sending Akeley a night-letter outlining the situation.

With commendable promptness a report came from the Boston office on the following afternoon, the agent telephoning as soon as he learned the facts. It seemed that the railway express clerk on No. 5508 had been able to recall an incident which might have much bearing on my loss—an argument with a very curious-voiced man, lean, sandy, and rustic-looking, when the train was waiting at Keene, N. H., shortly after one o'clock standard time.

The man, he said, was greatly excited about a heavy box which he claimed to expect, but which was neither on the train nor entered on the company's books. He had given the name of Stan-

ley Adams, and had had such a queerly thick droning voice, that it made the clerk abnormally dizzy and sleepy to listen to him. The clerk could not remember quite how the conversation had ended, but recalled starting into a fuller awakesness when the train began to move. The Boston agent added that this clerk was a young man of wholly unquestioned veracity and reliability, of known antecedents and long with the company.

That evening I went to Boston to interview the clerk in person, having obtained his name and address from the office. He was a frank, prepossessing fellow, but I saw that he could add nothing to his original account. Oddly, he was scarcely sure that he could even recognise the strange inquirer again. Realising that he had no more to tell, I returned to Arkham and sat up till morning writing letters to Akeley, to the express company and to the police department and station agent in Keene. I felt that the strange-voiced man who had so queerly affected the clerk must have a pivotal place in the ominous business, and hoped that Keene station employees and telegraph-office records might tell something about him and about how he happened to make his inquiry when and where he did.

I must admit, however, that all my investigations came to nothing. The queer-voiced man had indeed been noticed around the Keene station in the early afternoon of July 18, and one lounge seemed to couple him vaguely with a heavy box; but he was altogether unknown, and had not been seen before or since. He had not visited the telegraph office or received any message so far as could be learned, nor had any message which might justly be considered a notice of the black stone's presence on No. 5508 come through the office for anyone. Naturally Akeley joined with me in conducting these inquiries, and even made a personal trip to Keene to question the people around the station; but his attitude toward the matter was more fatalistic than mine. He seemed to find the loss of the box a portentous and menacing fulfilment of inevitable tendencies, and had no real hope at all of its recovery. He spoke of the undoubted telepathic and hypnotic powers of the hill creatures and their agents, and in one letter hinted that he did not believe the stone was on this earth any longer. For my part, I was duly enraged, for I had felt there was at least a chance of learning profound and astonishing things from the old, blurred hieroglyphs. The matter would have rankled bitterly in my mind had not Akeley's immediately subsequent letters brought up a

new phase of the whole horrible hill problem which at once seized all my attention.

The unknown things, Akeley wrote in a script grown pitifully tremulous, had begun to close in on him with a wholly new degree of determination. The nocturnal barking of the dogs whenever the moon was dim or absent was hideous now, and there had been attempts to molest him on the lonely roads he had to traverse by day. On the second of August, while bound for the village in his car, he had found a tree-trunk laid in his path at a point where the highway ran through a deep patch of woods; while the savage barking of the two great dogs he had with him told all too well of the things which must have been lurking near. What would have happened had the dogs not been there, he did not dare guess—but he never went out now without at least two of his faithful and powerful pack. Other road experiences had occurred on August fifth and sixth; a shot grazing his car on one occasion, and the barking of the dogs telling of unholy woodland presences on the other.

On August fifteenth I received a frantic letter which disturbed me greatly, and which made me wish Akeley could put aside his lonely reticence and call in the aid of the law. There had been frightful happenings on the night of the 12-13th, bullets flying outside the farmhouse, and three of the twelve great dogs being found shot dead in the morning. There were myriads of claw-prints in the road, with the human prints of Walter Brown among them. Akeley had started to telephone to Brattleboro for more dogs, but the wire had gone dead before he had a chance to say much. Later he went to Brattleboro in his car, and learned there that linemen had found the main cable neatly cut at a point where it ran through the deserted hills north of Newfane. But he was about to start home with four fine new dogs, and several cases of ammunition for his big-game repeating rifle. The letter was written at the post office in Brattleboro, and came through to me without delay.

My attitude toward the matter was by this time quickly slipping from a scientific to an alarmedly personal one. I was afraid for Akeley in his remote, lonely farmhouse, and half afraid for myself because of my now definite connection with the strange hill problem. The thing was *reaching out* so. Would it suck me in

and engulf me? In replying to his letter I urged him to seek help, and hinted that I might take action myself if he did not. I spoke of visiting Vermont in person in spite of his wishes, and of helping him explain the situation to the proper authorities. In return, however, I received only a telegram from Bellows Falls which read thus:

APPRECIATE YOUR POSITION BUT CAN DO NOTHING TAKE NO ACTION YOURSELF FOR IT COULD ONLY HARM BOTH WAIT FOR EXPLANATION

HENRY AKELEY

But the affair was steadily deepening. Upon my replying to the telegram I received a shaky note from Akeley with the astonishing news that he had not only never sent the wire, but had not received the letter from me to which it was an obvious reply. Hasty inquiries by him at Bellows Falls had brought out that the message was deposited by a strange sandy-haired man with a curiously thick, droning voice, though more than this he could not learn. The clerk showed him the original text as scrawled in pencil by the sender, but the handwriting was wholly unfamiliar. It was noticeable that the signature was misspelled—A-K-E-L-Y, without the second "E." Certain conjectures were inevitable, but amidst the obvious crisis he did not stop to elaborate upon them.

He spoke of the death of more dogs and the purchase of still others, and of the exchange of gunfire which had become a settled feature each moonless night. Brown's prints, and the prints of at least one or two more shod human figures, were now found regularly among the claw-prints in the road, and at the back of the farmyard. It was, Akeley admitted, a pretty bad business; and before long he would probably have to go to live with his California son whether or not he could sell the old place. But it was not easy to leave the only spot one could really think of as home. He must try to hang on a little longer; perhaps he could scare off the intruders—especially if he openly gave up all further attempts to penetrate their secrets.

Writing Akeley at once, I renewed my offers of aid, and spoke again of visiting him and helping him convince the authorities of his dire peril. In his reply he seemed less set against that plan than his past attitude would have led one to predict, but said he would like to hold off a little while longer—long enough to get his

things in order and reconcile himself to the idea of leaving an almost morbidly cherished birthplace. People looked askance at his studies and speculations and it would be better to get quietly off without setting the countryside in a turmoil and creating widespread doubts of his own sanity. He had had enough, he admitted, but he wanted to make a dignified exit if he could.

This letter reached me on the 28th of August, and I prepared and mailed as encouraging a reply as I could. Apparently the encouragement had effect, for Akeley had fewer terrors to report when he acknowledged my note. He was not very optimistic, though, and expressed the belief that it was only the full moon season which was holding the creatures off. He hoped there would not be many densely cloudy nights, and talked vaguely of boarding in Brattleboro when the moon waned. Again I wrote him encouragingly but on September 5th there came a fresh communication which had obviously crossed my letter in the mails; and to this I could not give any such hopeful response. In view of its importance I believe I had better give it in full—as best I can do from memory of the shaky script. It ran substantially as follows:

Monday

Dear Wilmarth—

A rather discouraging P. S. to my last. Last night was thickly cloudy—though no rain—and not a bit of moonlight got through. Things were pretty bad, and I think the end is getting near, in spite of all we have hoped. After midnight something landed on the roof of the house, and the dogs all rushed up to see what it was. I could hear them snapping and tearing around, and then one managed to get on the roof by jumping from the low ell. There was a terrible fight up there, and I heard a frightful *buzzing* which I'll never forget. And then there was a shocking smell. About the same time bullets came through the window and nearly grazed me. I think the main line of the hill creatures had got close to the house when the dogs divided because of the roof business. What was up there I don't know yet, but I'm afraid the creatures are learning to steer better with their space wings. I put out the light and used the windows for loopholes, and raked all around the house with rifle fire aimed just high enough not to hit the dogs. That seemed to end the business, but in the morning I found great pools of blood in the yard, besides pools of a green

sticky stuff that had the worst odour I have ever smelled. I climbed up on the roof and found more of the sticky stuff there. Five of the dogs were killed—I'm afraid I hit one myself by aiming too low, for he was shot in the back. Now I am setting the panes the shots broke, and am going to Brattleboro for more dogs. I guess the men at the kennels think I am crazy. Will drop another note later. Suppose I'll be ready for moving in a week or two, though it nearly kills me to think of it.

Hastily—Akeley

But this was not the only letter from Akeley to cross mine. On the next morning—September 6th—still another came; this time a frantic scrawl which utterly unnerved me and put me at a loss what to say or do next. Again I cannot do better than quote the text as faithfully as memory will let me.

Tuesday

Clouds didn't break, so no moon again—and going into the wane anyhow. I'd have the house wired for electricity and put in a searchlight if I didn't know they'd cut the cables as fast as they could be mended.

I think I am going crazy. It may be that all I have ever written you is a dream or madness. It was bad enough before, but this time it is too much. *They talked to me last night*—talked in that cursed buzzing voice and told me things *that I dare not repeat to you*. I heard them plainly above the barking of the dogs, and once when they were drowned out *a human voice helped them*. Keep out of this, Wilmarth—it is worse than either you or I ever suspected. *They don't mean to let me get to California now—they want to take me off alive, or what theoretically and mentally amounts to alive*—not only to Yuggoth, but beyond that—away outside the galaxy and possibly beyond the last curved rim of space. I told them I wouldn't go where they wish, *or in the terrible way they propose to take me*, but I'm afraid it will be no use. My place is so far out that they may come by day as well as by night before long. Six more dogs killed, and I felt presences all along the wooded parts of the road when I drove to Brattleboro today.

It was a mistake for me to try to send you that phonograph record and black stone. Better smash the record before it's too late. Will drop you another line tomorrow if I'm still here. Wish I

could arrange to get my books and things to Brattleboro and board there. I would run off without anything if I could but something inside my mind holds me back. I can slip out to Brattleboro, where I ought to be safe, but I feel just as much a prisoner there as at the house. And I seem to know that I couldn't get much farther even if I dropped everything and tried. It is horrible—don't get mixed up in this.

Yrs—Akeley

I did not sleep at all the night after receiving this terrible thing, and was utterly baffled as to Akeley's remaining degree of sanity. The substance of the note was wholly insane, yet the manner of expression—in view of all that had gone before—had a grimly potent quality of convincingness. I made no attempt to answer it, thinking it better to wait until Akeley might have time to reply to my latest communication. Such a reply indeed came on the following day, though the fresh material in it quite overshadowed any of the points brought up by the letter nominally answered. Here is what I recall of the text, scrawled and blotted as it was in the course of a plainly frantic and hurried composition.

Wednesday

W—

Your letter came, but it's no use to discuss anything any more. I am fully resigned. Wonder that I have even enough will power left to fight them off. Can't escape even if I were willing to give up everything and run. They'll get me.

Had a letter from them yesterday—R.F.D. man brought it while I was at Brattleboro. Typed and postmarked Bellows Falls. Tells what they want to do with me—I can't repeat it. Look out for yourself, too! Smash that record. Cloudy nights keep up, and moon waning all the time. Wish I dared to get help—it might brace up my will power—but everyone who would dare to come at all would call me crazy unless there happened to be some proof. Couldn't ask people to come for no reason at all—am all out of touch with everybody and have been for years.

But I haven't told you the worst, Wilmarth. Brace up to read this, for it will give you a shock. I am telling the truth, though. It is this—I *have seen and touched one of the things, or part of one of the things*. God, man, but it's awful! It was dead, of course. One of the dogs had it, and I found it near the kennel this

morning. I tried to save it in the woodshed to convince people of the whole thing, but it all evaporated in a few hours. Nothing left. You know, all those things in the rivers were seen only on the first morning after the flood. And here's the worst. I tried to photograph it for you, but when I developed the film *there wasn't anything visible except the woodshed*. What can the thing have been made of? I saw it and felt it, and they all leave footprints. It was surely made of matter—but what kind of matter? The shape can't be described. It was a great crab with a lot of pyramided fleshy rings or knots of thick, ropy stuff covered with feelers where a man's head would be. That green sticky stuff is its blood or juice. And there are more of them due on earth any minute.

Walter Brown is missing—hasn't been seen loafing around any of his usual corners in the villages hereabouts. I must have got him with one of my shots, though the creatures always seem to try to take their dead and wounded away.

Got into town this afternoon without any trouble, but am afraid they're beginning to hold off because they're sure of me. Am writing this in Brattleboro P. O. This may be goodbye—if it is, write my son George Goodenough Akeley, 176 Pleasant St., San Diego, Cal., *but don't come up here*. Write the boy if you don't hear from me in a week, and watch the papers for news.

I'm going to play my last two cards now—if I have the will power left. First to try poison gas on the things (I've got the right chemicals and have fixed up masks for myself and the dogs) and then if that doesn't work, tell the sheriff. They can lock me in a madhouse if they want to—it'll be better than what the *other creatures* would do. Perhaps I can get them to pay attention to the prints around the house—they are faint, but I can find them every morning. Suppose, though, police would say I faked them somehow; for they all think I'm a queer character.

Must try to have a state policeman spend a night here and see for himself—though it would be just like the creatures to learn about it and hold off that night. They cut my wires whenever I try to telephone in the night—the linemen think it is very queer, and may testify for me if they don't go and imagine I cut them myself. I haven't tried to keep them repaired for over a week now.

I could get some of the ignorant people to testify for me about the reality of the horrors, but everybody laughs at what they say, and anyway, they have shunned my place for so long that they

don't know any of the new events. You couldn't get one of those run-down farmers to come within a mile of my house for love or money. The mail-carrier hears what they say and jokes me about it—God! If I only dared tell him how real it is! I think I'll try to get him to notice the prints, but he comes in the afternoon and they're usually about gone by that time. If I kept one by setting a box or pan over it, he'd think surely it was a fake or joke.

Wish I hadn't gotten to be such a hermit, so folks don't drop around as they used to. I've never dared show the black stone or the kodak pictures, or play that record, to anybody but the ignorant people. The others would say I faked the whole business and do nothing but laugh. But I may yet try showing the pictures. They give those claw-prints clearly, even if the things that made them can't be photographed. What a shame nobody else saw that *thing* this morning before it went to nothing!

But I don't know as I care. After what I've been through, a madhouse is as good a place as any. The doctors can help me make up my mind to get away from this house, and that is all that will save me.

Write my son George if you don't hear soon. Goodbye, smash that record, and don't mix up in this.

Yrs—Akeley

This letter frankly plunged me into the blackest of terror. I did not know what to say in answer, but scratched off some incoherent words of advice and encouragement and sent them by registered mail. I recall urging Akeley to move to Brattleboro at once, and place himself under the protection of the authorities; adding that I would come to that town with the phonograph record and help convince the courts of his sanity. It was time, too, I think I wrote, to alarm the people generally against this thing in their midst. It will be observed that at this moment of stress my own belief in all Akeley had told and claimed was virtually complete, though I did think his failure to get a picture of the dead monster was due not to any freak of Nature but to some excited slip of his own.

Then, apparently crossing my incoherent note and reaching me Saturday afternoon, September 8th, came that curiously different and calming letter neatly typed on a new machine; that strange

letter of reassurance and invitation which must have marked so prodigious a transition in the whole nightmare drama of the lonely hills. Again I will quote from memory—seeking for special reasons to preserve as much of the flavour of the style as I can. It was postmarked Bellows Falls, and the signature as well as the body of the letter was typed—as is frequent with beginners in typing. The text, though, was marvellously accurate for a tyro's work; and I concluded that Akeley must have used a machine at some previous period—perhaps in college. To say that the letter relieved me would be only fair, yet beneath my relief lay a substratum of uneasiness. If Akeley had been sane in his terror, was he now sane in his deliverance? And the sort of "improved rapport" mentioned . . . what was it? The entire thing implied such a diametrical reversal of Akeley's previous attitude! But here is the substance of the text, carefully transcribed from a memory in which I take some pride.

Townshend, Vermont,
Thursday, Sept. 6, 1928.

My dear Wilmarth:—

It gives me great pleasure to be able to set you at rest regarding all the silly things I've been writing you. I say "silly," although by that I mean my frightened attitude rather than my descriptions of certain phenomena. Those phenomena are real and important enough; my mistake had been in establishing an anomalous attitude toward them.

I think I mentioned that my strange visitors were beginning to communicate with me, and to attempt such communication. Last night this exchange of speech became actual. In response to certain signals I admitted to the house a messenger from those outside—a fellow-human, let me hasten to say. He told me much that neither you nor I had even begun to guess, and showed clearly how totally we had misjudged and misinterpreted the purpose of the Outer Ones in maintaining their secret colony on this planet.

It seems that the evil legends about what they have offered to men, and what they wish in connection with the earth, are wholly the result of an ignorant misconception of allegorical speech—speech, of course, moulded by cultural backgrounds and thought-habits vastly different from anything we dream of. My own conjectures, I freely own, shot as widely past the mark as any of the

guesses of illiterate farmers and savage Indians. What I had thought morbid and shameful and ignominious is in reality awesome and mind-expanding and even *glorious*—my previous estimate being merely a phase of man's eternal tendency to hate and fear and shrink from the *utterly different*.

Now I regret the harm I have inflicted upon these alien and incredible beings in the course of our nightly skirmishes. If only I had consented to talk peacefully and reasonably with them in the first place! But they bear me no grudge, their emotions being organised very differently from ours. It is their misfortune to have had as their human agents in Vermont some very inferior specimens—the late Walter Brown, for example. He prejudiced me vastly against them. Actually, they have never knowingly harmed men, but have often been cruelly wronged and spied upon by our species. There is a whole secret cult of evil men (a man of your mystical erudition will understand me when I link them with Hastur and the Yellow Sign) devoted to the purpose of tracking them down and injuring them on behalf of monstrous powers from other dimensions. It is against these aggressors—not against normal humanity—that the drastic precautions of the Outer Ones are directed. Incidentally, I learned that many of our lost letters were stolen not by the Outer Ones but by the emissaries of this malign cult.

All that the Outer Ones wish of man is peace and nonmolestation and an increasing intellectual rapport. This latter is absolutely necessary now that our inventions and devices are expanding our knowledge and motions, and making it more and more impossible for the Outer Ones' necessary outposts to exist *secretly* on this planet. The alien beings desire to know mankind more fully, and to have a few of mankind's philosophic and scientific leaders know more about them. With such an exchange of knowledge all perils will pass, and a satisfactory *modus vivendi* be established. The very idea of any attempt to *enslave* or *degrade* mankind is ridiculous.

As a beginning of this improved rapport, the Outer Ones have naturally chosen me—whose knowledge of them is already so considerable—as their primary interpreter on earth. Much was told me last night—facts of the most stupendous and vista-opening nature—and more will be subsequently communicated to me both orally and in writing. I shall not be called upon to make any trip *outside* just yet, though I shall probably *wish* to do so later

on—employing special means and transcending everything which we have hitherto been accustomed to regard as human experience. My house will be besieged no longer. Everything has reverted to normal, and the dogs will have no further occupation. In place of terror I have been given a rich boon of knowledge and intellectual adventure which few other mortals have ever shared.

The Outer Beings are perhaps the most marvellous organic things in or beyond all space and time—members of a cosmos-wide race of which all other life-forms are merely degenerate variants. They are more vegetable than animal, if these terms can be applied to the sort of matter composing them, and have a somewhat fungoid structure; though the presence of a chlorophyll-like substance and a very singular nutritive system differentiate them altogether from true cormophytic fungi. Indeed, the type is composed of a form of matter totally alien to our part of space—with electrons having a wholly different vibration-rate. That is why the beings cannot be photographed on the *ordinary* camera films and plates of our known universe, even though our eyes can see them. With proper knowledge, however, any good chemist could make a photographic emulsion which would record their images.

The genus is unique in its ability to traverse the heatless and airless interstellar void in full corporeal form, and some of its variants cannot do this without mechanical aid or curious surgical transpositions. Only a few species have the ether-resisting wings characteristic of the Vermont variety. Those inhabiting certain remote peaks in the Old World were brought in other ways. Their external resemblance to animal life, and to the sort of structure we understand as material, is a matter of parallel evolution rather than of close kinship. Their brain-capacity exceeds that of any other surviving life-form, although the winged types of our hill country are by no means the most highly developed. Telepathy is their usual means of discourse, though they have rudimentary vocal organs which, after a slight operation (for surgery is an incredibly expert and everyday thing among them), can roughly duplicate the speech of such types of organism as still use speech.

Their main *immediate* abode is a still undiscovered and almost lightless planet at the very edge of our solar system—beyond Neptune, and the ninth in distance from the sun. It is, as we have inferred, the object mystically hinted at as “Yuggoth” in certain

ancient and forbidden writings; and it will soon be the scene of a strange focussing of thought upon our world in an effort to facilitate mental rapport. I would not be surprised if astronomers become sufficiently sensitive to these thought-currents to discover Yuggoth when the Outer Ones wish them to do so. But Yuggoth, of course, is only the stepping-stone. The main body of the beings inhabits strangely organized abysses wholly beyond the utmost reach of any human imagination. The space-time globule which we recognize as the totality of all cosmic entity is only an atom in the genuine infinity which is theirs. *And as much of this infinity as any human brain can hold is eventually to be opened up to me, as it has been to not more than fifty other men since the human race has existed.*

You will probably call this raving at first, Wilmarth, but in time you will appreciate the titanic opportunity I have stumbled upon. I want you to share as much of it as is possible, and to that end must tell you thousands of things that won't go on paper. In the past I have warned you not to come to see me. Now that all is safe, I take pleasure in rescinding that warning and inviting you.

Can't you make a trip up here before your college term opens? It would be marvellously delightful if you could. Bring along the phonograph record and all my letters to you as consultative data—we shall need them in piecing together the whole tremendous story. You might bring the kodak prints, too, since I seem to have mislaid the negatives and my own prints in all this recent excitement. But what a wealth of facts I have to add to all this groping and tentative material—*and what a stupendous device I have to supplement my additions!*

Don't hesitate—I am free from espionage now, and you will not meet anything unnatural or disturbing. Just come along and let my car meet you at the Brattleboro station—prepare to stay as long as you can, and expect many an evening of discussion of things beyond all human conjecture. Don't tell anyone about it, of course—for this matter must not get to the promiscuous public.

The train service to Brattleboro is not bad—you can get a timetable in Boston. Take the B. & M. to Greenfield, and then change for the brief remainder of the way. I suggest your taking the convenient 4:10 p.m.—standard—from Boston. This gets into Greenfield at 7:35, and at 9:19 a train leaves there which reaches Brattleboro at 10:01. That is week-days. Let me know the date and I'll have my car on hand at the station.

Pardon this typed letter, but my handwriting has grown shaky of late, as you know, and I don't feel equal to long stretches of script. I got this new Corona in Brattleboro yesterday—it seems to work very well.

Awaiting word, and hoping to see you shortly with the phonograph record and all my letters—and the kodak prints—

I am

Yours in anticipation,
Henry W. Akeley

TO ALBERT N. WILMARTH, ESQ.,
MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY,
ARKHAM, MASS.

The complexity of my emotions upon reading, re-reading, and pondering over this strange and unlooked-for letter is past adequate description. I have said that I was at once relieved and made uneasy, but this expresses only crudely the overtones of diverse and largely subconscious feelings which comprised both the relief and the uneasiness. To begin with, the thing was so antipodally at variance with the whole chain of horrors preceding it—the change of mood from stark terror to cool complacency and even exultation was so unheralded, lightning-like, and complete! I could scarcely believe that a single day could so alter the psychological perspective of one who had written that final frenzied bulletin of Wednesday, no matter what relieving disclosures that day might have brought. At certain moments a sense of conflicting unrealities made me wonder whether this whole distantly reported drama of fantastic forces were not a kind of half-illusory dream created largely within my own mind. Then I thought of the phonograph record and gave way to still greater bewilderment.

The letter seemed so unlike anything which could have been expected! As I analysed my impression, I saw that it consisted of two distinct phases. First, granting that Akeley had been sane before and was still sane, the indicated change in the situation itself was so swift and unthinkable. And secondly, the change in Akeley's own manner, attitude, and language was so vastly beyond the normal or the predictable. The man's whole personality seemed to have undergone an insidious mutation—a mutation so deep that one could scarcely reconcile his two aspects with the supposition that both represented equal sanity. Word-choice,

spelling—all were subtly different. And with my academic sensitiveness to prose style, I could trace profound divergences in his commonest reactions and rhythm-responses. Certainly, the emotional cataclysm or revelation which could produce so radical an overturn must be an extreme one indeed! Yet in another way the letter seemed quite characteristic of Akeley. The same old passion for infinity—the same old scholarly inquisitiveness. I could not a moment—or more than a moment—credit the idea of spuriousness or malign substitution. Did not the invitation—the willingness to have me test the truth of the letter in person—prove its genuineness?

I did not retire Saturday night, but sat up thinking of the shadows and marvels behind the letter I had received. My mind, aching from the quick succession of monstrous conceptions it had been forced to confront during the last four months, worked upon this startling new material in a cycle of doubt and acceptance which repeated most of the steps experienced in facing the earlier wonders; till long before dawn a burning interest and curiosity had begun to replace the original storm of perplexity and uneasiness. Mad or sane, metamorphosed or merely relieved, the chances were that Akeley had actually encountered some stupendous change of perspective in his hazardous research; some change at once diminishing his danger—real or fancied—and opening dizzy new vistas of cosmic and superhuman knowledge. My own zeal for the unknown flared up to meet his, and I felt myself touched by the contagion of the morbid barrier-breaking. To shake off the maddening and wearying limitations of time and space and natural law—to be linked with the vast *outside*—to come close to the nighted and abysmal secrets of the infinite and the ultimate—surely such a thing was worth the risk of one's life, soul, and sanity! And Akeley had said there was no longer any peril—he had invited me to visit him instead of warning me away as before. I tingled at the thought of what he might now have to tell me—there was an almost paralysing fascination in the thought of sitting in that lonely and lately-beleaguered farmhouse with a man who had talked with actual emissaries from outer space; sitting there with the terrible record and the pile of letters in which Akeley had summarised his earlier conclusions.

So late Sunday morning I telegraphed Akeley that I would meet him in Brattleboro on the following Wednesday—September 12th—if that date were convenient for him. In only one re-

spect did I depart from his suggestions, and that concerned the choice of a train. Frankly, I did not feel like arriving in that haunted Vermont region late at night; so instead of accepting the train he chose I telephoned the station and devised another arrangement. By rising early and taking the 8:07 a.m. (standard) into Boston, I could catch the 9:25 for Greenfield; arriving there at 12:22 noon. This connected exactly with a train reaching Brattleboro at 1:08 p.m.—a much more comfortable hour than 10:01 for meeting Akeley and riding with him into the close-pack, secret-guarding hills.

I mentioned this choice in my telegram, and was glad to learn in the reply which came toward evening that it had met with my prospective host's endorsement. His wire ran thus:

ARRANGEMENT SATISFACTORY WILL MEET ONE EIGHT TRAIN
WEDNESDAY DONT FORGET RECORD AND LETTERS AND PRINTS
KEEP DESTINATION QUIET EXPECT GREAT REVELATIONS

AKELEY

Receipt of this message in direct response to one sent to Akeley—and necessarily delivered to his house from the Townshend station either by official messenger or by a restored telephone service—removed any lingering subconscious doubts I may have had about the authorship of the perplexing letter. My relief was marked—indeed, it was greater than I could account for at the time; since all such doubts had been rather deeply buried. But I slept soundly and long that night, and was eagerly busy with preparations during the ensuing two days.

On Wednesday I started as agreed, taking with me a valise full of simple necessities and scientific data, including the hideous phonograph record, the Kodak prints, and the entire file of Akeley's correspondence. As requested, I had told no one where I was going; for I could see that the matter demanded utmost privacy, even allowing for its most favourable turns. The thought of actual mental contact with alien, outside entities was stupefying enough to my trained and somewhat prepared mind; and this being so, what might one think of its effect on the vast masses of uninformed laymen? I do not know whether dread or adventurous expectancy was uppermost in me as I changed trains at Boston

and began the long westward run out of familiar regions into those I knew less thoroughly. Waltham—Concord—Ayer—Fitchburg—Gardner—Athol—

My train reached Greenfield seven minutes late, but the north-bound connecting express had been held. Transferring in haste, I felt a curious breathlessness as the cars rumbled on through the early afternoon sunlight into territories I had always read of but had never before visited. I knew I was entering an altogether older-fashioned and more primitive New England than the mechanised, urbanised coastal and southern areas where all my life had been spent; an unspoiled, ancestral New England without the foreigners and factory-smoke, bill-boards and concrete roads, of the sections which modernity has touched. There would be odd survivals of that continuous native life whose deep roots make it the one authentic outgrowth of the landscape—the continuous native life which keeps alive strange ancient memories, and fertilises the soil for shadowy, marvellous, and seldom-mentioned beliefs.

Now and then I saw the blue Connecticut River gleaming in the sun, and after leaving Northfield we crossed it. Ahead loomed green and cryptical hills, and when the conductor came around I learned that I was at last in Vermont. He told me to set my watch back an hour, since the northern hill country will have no dealings with newfangled daylight time schemes. As I did so it seemed to me that I was likewise turning the calendar back a century.

The train kept close to the river, and across in New Hampshire I could see the approaching slope of steep Wantastiquet, about which singular old legends cluster. Then streets appeared on my left, and a green island showed in the stream on my right. People rose and filed to the door, and I followed them. The car stopped, and I alighted beneath the long trainshed of the Brattleboro station.

Looking over the line of waiting motors I hesitated a moment to see which one might turn out to be the Akeley Ford, but my identity was divined before I could take the initiative. And yet it was clearly not Akeley himself who advanced to meet me with an outstretched hand and a mellowly phrased query as to whether I was indeed Mr. Albert N. Wilmarth of Arkham. This man bore no resemblance to the bearded, grizzled Akeley of the snapshot; but was a younger and more urbane person, fashionably dressed,

and wearing only a small, dark moustache. His cultivated voice held an odd and almost disturbing hint of vague familiarity, though I could not definitely place it in my memory.

As I surveyed him I heard him explaining that he was a friend of my prospective host's who had come down from Townshend in his stead. Akeley, he declared, had suffered a sudden attack of some asthmatic trouble, and did not feel equal to making a trip in the outdoor air. It was not serious, however, and there was to be no change in plans regarding my visit. I could not make out just how much this Mr. Noyes—as he announced himself—knew of Akeley's researches and discoveries, though it seemed to me that his casual manner stamped him as a comparative outsider. Remembering what a hermit Akeley had been, I was a trifle surprised at the ready availability of such a friend; but did not let my puzzlement deter me from entering the motor to which he gestured me. It was not the small ancient car I had expected from Akeley's descriptions, but a large and immaculate specimen of recent pattern—apparently Noyes's own, and bearing Massachusetts license plates with the amusing "sacred codfish" device of that year. My guide, I concluded, must be a summer transient in the Townshend region.

Noyes climbed into the car beside me and started it at once. I was glad that he did not overflow with conversation, for some peculiar atmospheric tensivity made me feel disinclined to talk. The town seemed very attractive in the afternoon sunlight as we swept up an incline and turned to the right into the main street. It drowsed like the older New England cities which one remembers from boyhood, and something in the collocation of roofs and steeples and chimneys and brick walls formed contours touching deep violstrings of ancestral emotion. I could tell that I was at the gateway of a region half-bewitched through the piling-up of unbroken time-accumulations; a region where old, strange things have had a chance to grow and linger because they have never been stirred up.

As we passed out of Brattleboro my sense of constraint and foreboding increased, for a vague quality in the hill-crowded countryside with its towering, threatening, close-pressing green and granite slopes hinted at obscure secrets and immemorial survivals which might or might not be hostile to mankind. For a time our course followed a broad, shallow river which flowed down from unknown hills in the north, and I shivered when my

companion told me it was the West River. It was in this stream, I recalled from newspaper items that one of the morbid crablike beings had been seen floating after the floods.

Gradually the country around us grew wilder and more deserted. Archaic covered bridges lingered fearsomely out of the past in pockets of the hills, and the half-abandoned railway track paralleling the river seemed to exhale a nebulously visible air of desolation. There were awesome sweeps of vivid valley where great cliffs rose, New England's virgin granite showing grey and austere through the verdure that scaled the crests. There were gorges where untamed streams leaped, bearing down toward the river the unimagined secrets of a thousand pathless peaks. Branching away now and then were narrow, half-concealed roads that bored their way through solid, luxuriant masses of forest among whose primal trees whole armies of elemental spirits might well lurk. As I saw these I thought of how Akeley had been molested by unseen agencies on his drives along this very route, and did not wonder that such things could be.

The quaint, sightly village of Newfane, reached in less than an hour, was our last link with that world which man can definitely call his own by virtue of conquest and complete occupancy. After that we cast off all allegiance to immediate, tangible, and time-touched things, and entered a fantastic world of hushed unreality in which the narrow, ribbon-like road rose and fell and curved with an almost sentient and purposeful caprice amidst the tenantless green peaks and half-deserted valleys. Except for the sound of the motor, and the faint stir of the few lonely farms we passed at infrequent intervals, the only thing that reached my ears was the gurgling, insidious trickle of strange waters from numberless hidden fountains in the shadowy woods.

The nearness and intimacy of the dwarfed, domed hills now became veritably breath-taking. Their steepness and abruptness were even greater than I had imagined from hearsay, and suggested nothing in common with the prosaic objective world we know. The dense, unvisited woods on those inaccessible slopes seemed to harbour alien and incredible things, and I felt that the very outline of the hills themselves held some strange and aeon-forgotten meaning, as if they were vast hieroglyphs left by a rumoured titan race whose glories live only in rare, deep dreams. All the legends of the past, and all the stupefying imputations of Henry Akeley's letters and exhibits, welled up in my memory to

heighten the atmosphere of tension and growing menace. The purpose of my visit, and the frightful abnormalities it postulated struck at me all at once with a chill sensation that nearly overbalanced my ardour for strange delvings.

My guide must have noticed my disturbed attitude; for as the road grew wilder and more irregular, and our motion slower and more jolting, his occasional pleasant comments expanded into a steadier flow of discourse. He spoke of the beauty and weirdness of the country, and revealed some acquaintance with the folklore studies of my prospective host. From his polite questions it was obvious that he knew I had come for a scientific purpose, and that I was bringing data of some importance; but he gave no sign of appreciating the depth and awfulness of the knowledge which Akeley had finally reached.

His manner was so cheerful, normal, and urbane that his remarks ought to have calmed and reassured me; but oddly enough, I felt only the more disturbed as we bumped and veered onward into the unknown wilderness of hills and woods. At times it seemed as if he were pumping me to see what I knew of the monstrous secrets of the place, and with every fresh utterance that vague, teasing, baffling *familiarity* in his voice increased. It was not an ordinary or healthy familiarity despite the thoroughly wholesome and cultivated nature of the voice. I somehow linked it with forgotten nightmares, and felt that I might go mad if I recognised it. If any good excuse had existed, I think I would have turned back from my visit. As it was, I could not well do so—and it occurred to me that a cool, scientific conversation with Akeley himself after my arrival would help greatly to pull me together.

Besides, there was a strangely calming element of cosmic beauty in the hypnotic landscape through which we climbed and plunged fantastically. Time had lost itself in the labyrinths behind, and around us stretched only the flowerig waves of faery and the recaptured loveliness of vanished centuries—the hoary groves, the untainted pastures edged with gay autumnal blossoms, and at vast intervals the small brown farmsteads nestling amidst huge trees beneath vertical precipices of fragrant brier and meadow-grass. Even the sunlight assumed a supernal glamour, as if some special atmosphere or exhalation mantled the whole region. I had seen nothing like it before save in the magic vistas that sometimes form the backgrounds of Italian primitives. Sodoma and Leonardo conceived such expanses, but only in the

distance, and through the vaultings of Renaissance arcades. We were now burrowing bodily through the midst of the picture, and I seemed to find in its necromancy a thing I had innately known or inherited and for which I had always been vainly searching.

Suddenly, after rounding an obtuse angle at the top of a sharp ascent, the car came to a standstill. On my left, across a well-kept lawn which stretched to the road and flaunted a border of white-washed stones, rose a white, two-and-a-half-story house of unusual size and elegance for the region, with a congeries of contiguous or arcade-linked barns, sheds, and windmill behind and to the right. I recognised it at once from the snap-shot I had received, and was not surprised to see the name of Henry Akeley on the galvanised-iron mailbox near the road. For some distance back of the house a level stretch of marshy and sparsely-wooded land extended, beyond which soared a steep, thickly-forested hillside ending in a jagged leafy crest. This latter, I knew, was the summit of Dark Mountain, half way up which we must have climbed already.

Alighting from the car and taking my valise, Noyes asked me to wait while he went in and notified Akeley of my advent. He himself, he added, had important business elsewhere, and could not stop for more than a moment. As he briskly walked up the path to the house I climbed out of the car myself, wishing to stretch my legs a little before settling down to a sedentary conversation. My feeling of nervousness and tension had risen to a maximum again now that I was on the actual scene of the morbid beleaguering described so hauntingly in Akeley's letters, and I honestly dreaded the coming discussions which were to link me with such alien and forbidden worlds.

Close contact with the utterly bizarre is often more terrifying than inspiring, and it did not cheer me to think that this very bit of dusty road was the place where those monstrous tracks and that foetid green ichor had been found after moonless nights of fear and death. Idly I noticed that none of Akeley's dogs seemed to be about. Had he sold them all as soon as the Outer Ones made peace with him? Try as I might, I could not have the same confidence in the depth and sincerity of that peace which appeared in Akeley's final and queerly different letter. After all, he was a man of much simplicity and with little worldly experience. Was there not, perhaps, some deep and sinister undercurrent beneath the surface of the new alliance?

Led by my thoughts, my eyes turned downward to the powdery road surface which had held such hideous testimonies. The last few days had been dry, and tracks of all sorts cluttered the rutted, irregular highway despite the unfrequented nature of the district. With a vague curiosity I began to trace the outline of some of the heterogeneous impressions, trying meanwhile to curb the flights of macabre fancy which the place and its memories suggested. There was something menacing and uncomfortable in the funereal stillness, in the muffled, subtle trickle of distant brooks, and in the crowding green peaks and black-wooded precipices that choked the narrow horizon.

And then an image shot into my consciousness which made those vague menaces and flights of fancy seem mild and insignificant indeed. I have said that I was scanning the miscellaneous prints in the road with a kind of idle curiosity—but all at once that curiosity was shockingly snuffed out by a sudden and paralyzing gust of active terror. For though the dust tracks were in general confused and overlapping, and unlikely to arrest any casual gaze, my restless vision had caught certain details near the spot where the path to the house joined the highway; and had recognised beyond doubt or hope the frightful significance of those details. It was not for nothing, alas, that I had pored for hours over the kodak views of the Outer Ones' claw-prints which Akeley had sent. Too well did I know the marks of those loathsome nippers, and that hint of ambiguous direction which stamped the horrors as no creatures of this planet. No chance had been left me for merciful mistake. Here, indeed, in objective form before my own eyes, and surely made not many hours ago, were at least three marks which stood out blasphemously among the surprising plethora of blurred footprints leading to and from the Akeley farmhouse. *They were the hellish tracks of the living fungi from Yuggoth.*

I pulled myself together in time to stifle a scream. After all, what more was there than I might have expected, assuming that I had really believed Akeley's letters? He had spoken of making peace with the things. Why, then, was it strange that some of them had visited his house? But the terror was stronger than the reassurance. Could any man be expected to look unmoved for the first time upon the claw-marks of animate beings from outer depths of space? Just then I saw Noyes emerge from the door and

approach with a brisk step. I must, I reflected, keep command of myself, for the chances were that this genial friend knew nothing of Akeley's profoundest and most stupendous probings into the forbidden.

Akeley, Noyes hastened to inform me, was glad and ready to see me; although his sudden attack of asthma would prevent him from being a very competent host for a day or two. These spells hit him hard when they came, and were always accompanied by a debilitating fever and general weakness. He never was good for much while they lasted—had to talk in a whisper, and was very clumsy and feeble in getting about. His feet and ankles swelled, too, so that he had to bandage them like a gouty old beef-eater. Today he was in rather bad shape, so that I would have to attend very largely to my own needs; but he was none the less eager for conversation. I would find him in the study at the left of the front hall—the room where the blinds were shut. He had to keep the sunlight out when he was ill, for his eyes were very sensitive.

As Noyes bade me adieu and rode off northward in his car I began to walk slowly toward the house. The door had been left ajar for me; but before approaching and entering I cast a searching glance around the whole place, trying to decide what had struck me as so intangibly queer about it. The barns and sheds looked trimly prosaic enough, and I noticed Akeley's battered Ford in its capacious, unguarded shelter. Then the secret of the queerness reached me. It was the total silence. Ordinarily a farm is at least moderately murmurous from its various kinds of livestock, but here all signs of life were missing. What of the hens and the hogs? The cows, of which Akeley had said he possessed several, might conceivably be out to pasture, and the dogs might possibly have been sold; but the absence of any trace of cackling or grunting was truly singular.

I did not pause long on the path, but resolutely entered the open house door and closed it behind me. It had cost me a distinct psychological effort to do so, and now that I was shut inside I had a momentary longing for precipitate retreat. Not that the place was in the least sinister in visual suggestion; on the contrary, I thought the graceful late-colonial hallway very tasteful and wholesome, and admired the evident breeding of the man who had furnished it. What made me wish to flee was something very attenuated and indefinable. Perhaps it was a certain odd

odour which I thought I noticed—though I well knew how common musty odours are in even the best of ancient farmhouses.

Refusing to let these cloudy qualms overmaster me, I recalled Noyes's instructions and pushed open the six-panelled, brass-latched white door on my left. The room beyond was darkened, as I had known before; and as I entered it I noticed that the queer odour was stronger there. There likewise appeared to be some faint, half-imaginary rhythm or vibration in the air. For a moment the closed blinds allowed me to see very little, but then a kind of apologetic hacking or whispering sound drew my attention to a great easy-chair in the farther, darker corner of the room. Within its shadowy depths I saw the white blur of a man's face and hands; and in a moment I had crossed to greet the figure who had tried to speak. Dim though the light was, I perceived that this was indeed my host. I had studied the kodak picture repeatedly, and there could be no mistake about this firm, weather-beaten face with the cropped, grizzled beard.

But as I looked again my recognition was mixed with sadness and anxiety; for certainly, his face was that of a very sick man. I felt that there must be something more than asthma behind that strained, rigid, immobile expression and unwinking glassy stare; and realised how terribly the strain of his frightful experiences must have told on him. Was it not enough to break any human being—even a younger man than this intrepid delver into the forbidden? The strange and sudden relief, I feared, had come too late to save him from something like a general breakdown. There was a touch of the pitiful in the limp, lifeless way his lean hands rested in his lap. He had on a loose dressing-gown, and was swathed around the head and high around the neck with a vivid yellow scarf or hood.

And then I saw that he was trying to talk in the same hacking whisper with which he had greeted me. It was a hard whisper to catch at first, since the grey moustache concealed all movements of the lips, and something in its timbre disturbed me greatly; but by concentrating my attention I could soon make out its purport surprisingly well. The accent was by no means a rustic one, and the language was even more polished than correspondence had led me to expect.

"Mr. Wilmarth, I presume? You must pardon my not rising. I

am quite ill, as Mr. Noyes must have told you; but I could not resist having you come just the same. You know what I wrote in my last letter—there is so much to tell you tomorrow when I shall feel better. I can't say how glad I am to see you in person after all our many letters. You have the file with you, of course? And the kodak prints and records? Noyes put your valise in the hall—I suppose you saw it. For tonight I fear you'll have to wait on yourself to a great extent. Your room is upstairs—the one over this—and you'll see the bathroom door open at the head of the staircase. There's a meal spread for you in the dining-room—right through this door at your right—which you can take whenever you feel like it. I'll be a better host tomorrow—but just now weakness leaves me helpless.

"Make yourself at home—you might take out the letters and pictures and records and put them on the table here before you go upstairs with your bag. It is here that we shall discuss them—you can see my phonograph on that corner stand.

"No, thanks—there's nothing you can do for me. I know these spells of old. Just come back for a little quiet visiting before night, and then go to bed when you please. I'll rest right here—perhaps sleep here all night as I often do. In the morning I'll be far better able to go into the things we must go into. You realise, of course, the utterly stupendous nature of the matter before us. To us, as to only a few men on this earth, there will be opened up gulfs of time and space and knowledge beyond anything within the conception of human science or philosophy.

"Do you know that Einstein is wrong, and that certain objects and forces *can* move with a velocity greater than that of light? With proper aid I expect to go backward and forward in time, and actually *see* and *feel* the earth of remote past and future epochs. You can't imagine the degree to which those beings have carried science. There is nothing they can't do with the mind and body of living organisms. I expect to visit other planets, and even other stars and galaxies. The first trip will be to Yuggoth, the nearest world fully peopled by the beings. It is a strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system—unknown to earthly astronomers as yet. But I must have written you about this. At the proper time, you know, the beings there will direct thought-currents toward us and cause it to be discovered—or perhaps let one of their human allies give the scientists a hint.

"There are mighty cities on Yuggoth—great tiers of terraced

towers built of black stone like the specimen I tried to send you. That came from Yuggoth. The sun shines there no brighter than a star, but the beings need no light. They have other subtler senses, and put no windows in their great houses and temples. Light even hurts and hampers and confuses them, for it does not exist at all in the black cosmos outside time and space where they came from originally. To visit Yuggoth would drive any weak man mad—yet I am going there. The black rivers of pitch that flow under those mysterious cyclopean bridges—things built by some elder race extinct and forgotten before the beings came to Yuggoth from the ultimate voids—ought to be enough to make any man a Dante or Poe if he can keep sane long enough to tell what he has seen.

“But remember—that dark world of fungoid gardens and windowless cities isn’t really terrible. It is only to us that it would seem so. Probably this world seemed just as terrible to the beings when they first explored it in the primal age. You know they were here long before the fabulous epoch of Cthulhu was over, and remember all about sunken R’lyeh when it was above the waters. They’ve been inside the earth, too—there are openings which human beings know nothing of—some of them in these very Vermont hills—and great worlds of unknown life down there; blue-litten, K’n-yan, red-litten Yoth, and black, lightless N’kai. It’s from N’kai that frightful Tsathoggua came—you know, the amorphous, toad-like god-creature mentioned in the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* and the *Necronomicon* and the Commorion myth-cycle preserved by the Atlantean-high-priest Klarkash-Ton.

“But we will talk of all this later on. It must be four or five o’clock by this time. Better bring the stuff from your bag, take a bite, and then come back for a comfortable chat.”

Very slowly I turned and began to obey my host; fetching my valise, extracting and depositing the desired articles, and finally ascending to the room designated as mine. With the memory of that roadside claw-print fresh in my mind, Akeley’s whispered paragraphs had affected me queerly; and the hints of familiarity with this unknown world of fungous life—forbidden Yuggoth—made my flesh creep more than I cared to own. I was tremendously sorry about Akeley’s illness, but had to confess that his hoarse whisper had a hateful as well as pitiful quality. If only he wouldn’t gloat so about Yuggoth and its black secrets!

My room proved a very pleasant and well-furnished one, de-

void alike of the musty odour and disturbing sense of vibration; and after leaving my valise there I descended again to greet Akeley and take the lunch he had set out for me. The dining-room was just beyond the study, and I saw that a kitchen ell extended still farther in the same direction. On the dining-table an ample array of sandwiches, cake, and cheese awaited me, and a Thermos-bottle beside a cup and saucer testified that hot coffee had not been forgotten. After a well-relished meal I poured myself a liberal cup of coffee, but found that the culinary standard had suffered a lapse in this one detail. My first spoonful revealed a faintly unpleasant acrid taste, so that I did not take more. Throughout the lunch I thought of Akeley sitting silently in the great chair in the darkened next room. Once I went in to beg him to share the repast, but he whispered that he could eat nothing as yet. Later on, just before he slept, he would take some malted milk—all he ought to have that day.

After lunch I insisted on clearing the dishes away and washing them in the kitchen sink—incidentally emptying the coffee which I had not been able to appreciate. Then returning to the darkened study I drew up a chair near my host's corner and prepared for such conversation as he might feel inclined to conduct. The letters, pictures, and record were still on the large centre-table, but for the nonce we did not have to draw upon them. Before long I forgot even the bizarre odour and curious suggestions of vibration.

I have said that there were things in some of Akeley's letters—especially the second and most voluminous one—which I would not dare to quote or even form into words on paper. This hesitancy applies with still greater force to the things I heard whispered that evening in the darkened room among the lonely haunted hills. Of the extent of the cosmic horrors unfolded by that raucous voice I cannot even hint. He had known hideous things before, but what he had learned since making his pact with the Outside Things was almost too much for sanity to bear. Even now I absolutely refused to believe what he implied about the constitution of ultimate infinity, the juxtaposition of dimensions, and the frightful position of our known cosmos of space and time in the unending chain of linked cosmos-atoms which makes up the immediate super-cosmos of curves, angles, and material and semi-material electronic organisation.

Never was a sane man more dangerously close to the arcana of

basic entity—never was an organic brain nearer to utter annihilation in the chaos that transcends form and force and symmetry. I learned whence Cthulhu *first* came, and why half the great temporary stars of history had flared forth. I guessed—from hints which made even my informant pause timidly—the secret behind the Magellanic Clouds and globular nebulae, and the black truth veiled by the immemorial allegory of Tao. The nature of the Doels was plainly revealed, and I was told the essence (though not the source) of the Hounds of Tindalos. The legend of Yig, Father of Serpents, remained figurative no longer, and I started with loathing when told of the monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space which the *Necronomicon* had mercifully cloaked under the name of Azathoth. It was shocking to have the foulest nightmares of secret myth cleared up in concrete terms whose stark, morbid hatefulness exceeded the boldest hints of ancient and mediaeval mystics. Ineluctably I was led to believe that the first whisperers of these accursed tales must have had discourse with Akeley's Outer Ones, and perhaps have visited outer cosmic realms as Akeley now proposed visiting them.

I was told of the Black Stone and what it implied, and was glad that it had not reached me. My guesses about those hieroglyphics had been all too correct! And yet Akeley now seemed reconciled to the whole fiendish system he had stumbled upon; reconciled and eager to probe farther into the monstrous abyss. I wondered what beings he had talked with since his last letter to me, and whether many of them had been as human as that first emissary he had mentioned. The tension in my head grew insufferable, and I built up all sorts of wild theories about that queer, persistent odour and those insidious hints of vibration in the darkened room.

Night was falling now, and as I recalled what Akeley had written me about those earlier nights I shuddered to think there would be no moon. Nor did I like the way the farmhouse nestled in the lee of that colossal forested slope leading up to Dark Mountain's unvisited crest. With Akeley's permission I lighted a small oil lamp, turned it low, and set it on a distant bookcase beside the ghostly bust of Milton; but afterward I was sorry I had done so, for it made my host's strained, immobile face and listless hands look damnably abnormal and corpse-like. He seemed half-incapable of motion, though I saw him nod stiffly once in awhile.

After what he had told, I could scarcely imagine what profounder secrets he was saving for the morrow; but at last it developed that his trip to Yuggoth and beyond—and *my own possible participation in it*—was to be the next day's topic. He must have been amused by the start of horror I gave at hearing a cosmic voyage on my part proposed, for his head wobbled violently when I showed my fear. Subsequently he spoke very gently of how human beings might accomplish—and several times had accomplished—the seemingly impossible flight across the interstellar void. *It seemed that complete human bodies did not indeed make the trip*, but that the prodigious surgical, biological, chemical, and mechanical skill of the Outer Ones had found a way to convey human brains without their concomitant physical structure.

There was a harmless way to extract a brain, and a way to keep the organic residue alive during its absence. The bare, compact cerebral matter was then immersed in an occasionally replenished fluid within an ether-tight cylinder of a metal mined in Yuggoth, certain electrodes reaching through and connecting at will with elaborate instruments capable of duplicating the three vital faculties of sight, hearing, and speech. For the winged fungus-beings to carry the brain-cylinders intact through space was an easy matter. Then, on every planet covered by their civilisation, they would find plenty of adjustable faculty-instruments capable of being connected with the encased brains; so that after a little fitting these travelling intelligences could be given a full sensory and articulate life—albeit a bodiless and mechanical one—at each stage of their journeying through and beyond the space-time continuum. It was as simple as carrying a phonograph record about and playing it wherever a phonograph of corresponding make exists. Of its success there could be no question. Akeley was not afraid. Had it not been brilliantly accomplished again and again?

For the first time one of the inert, wasted hands raised itself and pointed stiffly to a high shelf on the farther side of the room. There, in a neat row, stood more than a dozen cylinders of a metal I had never seen before—cylinders about a foot high and somewhat less in diameter, with three curious sockets set in an isosceles triangle over the front convex surface of each. One of them was linked at two of the sockets to a pair of singular-looking machines that stood in the background. Of their purport I did not need to be told, and I shivered as with ague. Then I

saw the hand point to a much nearer corner where some intricate instruments with attached cords and plugs, several of them much like the two devices on the shelf behind the cylinders, were huddled together.

"There are four kinds of instruments here, Wilmarth," whispered the voice. "Four kinds—three faculties each—makes twelve pieces in all. You see there are four different sorts of beings represented in those cylinders up there. Three humans, six fungoid beings who can't navigate space corporeally, two beings from Neptune (God! if you could see the body this type has on its own planet!), and the rest entities from the central caverns of an especially interesting dark star beyond the galaxy. In the principal outpost inside Round Hill you'll now and then find more cylinders and machines—cylinders of extra-cosmic brains with different senses from any we know—allies and explorers from the uttermost Outside—and special machines for giving them impressions and expression in the several ways suited at once to them and to the comprehensions of different types of listeners. Round Hill, like most of the beings' main outposts all through the various universes, is a very cosmopolitan place. Of course, only the more common types have been lent to me for experiment.

"Here—take the three machines I point to and set them on the table. That tall one with the two glass lenses in front—then the box with the vacuum tubes and sounding-board—and now the one with the metal disc on top. Now for the cylinder with the label 'B-67' pasted on it. Just stand in that Windsor chair to reach the shelf. Heavy? Never mind! Be sure of the number—B-67. Don't bother that fresh, shiny cylinder joined to the two testing instruments—the one with my name on it. Set B-67 on the table near where you've put the machines—and see that the dial switch on all three machines is jammed over to the extreme left.

"Now connect the cord of the lens machine with the upper socket on the cylinder—there! Join the tube machine to the lower left hand socket, and the disc apparatus to the outer socket. Now move all the dial switches on the machines over to the extreme right—first the lens one, then the disc one, and then the tube one. That's right. I might as well tell you that this is a human being—just like any of us. I'll give you a taste of some of the others tomorrow."

To this day I do not know why I obeyed those whispers so slavishly, or whether I thought Akeley was mad or sane. After

what had gone before, I ought to have been prepared for anything; but this mechanical mummary seemed so like the typical vagaries of crazed inventors and scientists that it struck a chord of doubt which even the preceding discourse had not excited. What the whisperer implied was beyond all human belief—yet were not the other things still farther beyond, and less preposterous only because of their remoteness from tangible concrete proof?

As my mind reeled amidst this chaos, I became conscious of a mixed grating and whirring from all three of the machines lately linked to the cylinder—a grating and whirring which soon subsided into a virtual noiselessness. What was about to happen? Was I to hear a voice? And if so, what proof would I have that it was not some cleverly concocted radio device talked into by a concealed but closely watched speaker? Even how I am unwilling to swear just what I heard, or just what phenomenon really took place before me. But something certainly seemed to take place.

To be brief and plain, the machine with the tubes and sound-box began to speak, and with a point and intelligence which left no doubt that the speaker was actually present and observing us. The voice was loud, metallic, lifeless, and plainly mechanical in every detail of its production. It was incapable of inflection or expressiveness, but scraped and rattled on which a deadly precision and deliberation.

"Mr. Wilmarth," it said, "I hope I do not startle you. I am a human being like yourself, though my body is now resting safely under proper vitalising treatment inside Round Hill, about a mile and a half east of here. I myself am here with you—my brain is in that cylinder and I see, hear, and speak through these electronic vibrators. In a week I am going across the void as I have been many times before, and I expect to have the pleasure of Mr. Akeley's company. I wish I might have yours as well; for I know you by sight and reputation, and have kept close track of your correspondence with our friend. I am, of course, one of the men who have become allied with the outside beings visiting our planet. I met them first in the Himalayas, and have helped them in various ways. In return they have given me experiences such as few men have ever had.

"Do you realise what it means when I say I have been on thirty-seven different celestial bodies—planets, dark stars, and less definable objects—including eight outside our galaxy and two out-

side the curved cosmos of space and time? All this has not harmed me in the least. My brain has been removed from my body by fissions so adroit that it would be crude to call the operation surgery. The visiting beings have methods which make these extractions easy and almost normal—and one's body never ages when the brain is out of it. The brain, I may add, is virtually immortal with its mechanical faculties and a limited nourishment supplied by occasional changes of the preserving fluid.

"Altogether, I hope most heartily that you will decide to come with Mr. Akeley and me. The visitors are eager to know men of knowledge like yourself, and to show them the great abysses that most of us have had to dream about in fanciful ignorance. It may seem strange at first to meet them, but I know you will be above minding that. I think Mr. Noyes will go along, too—the man who doubtless brought you up here in his car. He has been one of us for years—I suppose you recognised his voice as one of those on the record Mr. Akeley sent you."

At my violent start the speaker paused a moment before concluding.

"So Mr. Wilmarth, I will leave the matter to you; merely adding that a man with your love of strangeness and folklore ought never to miss such a chance as this. There is nothing to fear. All transitions are painless, and there is much to enjoy in a wholly mechanised state of sensation. When the electrodes are disconnected, one merely drops off into a sleep of especially vivid and fantastic dreams.

"And now, if you don't mind, we might adjourn our session till tomorrow. Good night—just turn all the switches back to the left; never mind the exact order, though you might let the lens machine be last. Good night, Mr. Akeley—treat our guest well! Ready now with those switches?"

That was all. I obeyed mechanically and shut off all three switches though dazed with doubt of everything that had occurred. My head was still reeling as I heard Akeley's whispering voice telling me that I might leave all the apparatus on the table just as it was. He did not essay any comment on what had happened, and indeed no comment could have conveyed much to my burdened faculties. I heard him telling me I could take the lamp to use in my room, and deduced that he wished to rest alone in the dark. It was surely time he rested, for his discourse of the afternoon and evening had been such as to exhaust even a vigor-

ous man. Still dazed, I bade my host good night and went upstairs with the lamp, although I had an excellent pocket flashlight with me.

I was glad to be out of that downstairs study with the queer odour and vague suggestions of vibration, yet could not of course escape a hideous sense of dread and peril and cosmic abnormality as I thought of the place I was in and the forces I was meeting. The wild, lonely region, the black, mysteriously forested slope towering so close behind the house, the footprint in the road, the sick, motionless whisperer in the dark, the hellish cylinders and machines, and above all the invitations to strange surgery and stranger voyagings—these things, all so new and in such sudden succession, rushed in on me with a cumulative force which sapped my will and almost undermined my physical strength.

To discover that my guide Noyes was the human celebrant in that monstrous bygone Sabbat-ritual on the phonograph record was a particular shock, though I had previously sensed a dim, repellent familiarity in his voice. Another special shock came from my own attitude toward my host whenever I paused to analyse it; for much as I had instinctively liked Akeley as revealed in his correspondence, I now found that he filled me with a distinct repulsion. His illness ought to have excited my pity; but instead, it gave me a kind of shudder. He was so rigid and inert and corpse-like—and that incessant whispering was so hateful and un-human!

It occurred to me that this whispering was different from anything else of the kind I had ever heard; that, despite the curious motionlessness of the speaker's moustache-screened lips, it had a latent strength and carrying-power remarkable for the wheezings of an asthmatic. I had been able to understand the speaker when wholly across the room, and once or twice it had seemed to me that the faint but penetrant sounds represented not so much weakness as deliberate repression—for what reason I could not guess. From the first I had felt a disturbing quality in their timbre. Now, when I tried to weigh the matter, I thought I could trace this impression to a kind of subconscious familiarity like that which had made Noyes's voice so hazily ominous. But when or where I had encountered the thing it hinted at, was more than I could tell.

One thing was certain—I would not spend another night here. My scientific zeal had vanished amidst fear and loathing, and I

felt nothing now but a wish to escape from this net of morbidity and unnatural revelation. I knew enough now. It must indeed be true that strange cosmic linkages do exist—but such things are surely not meant for normal human beings to meddle with.

Blasphemous influences seemed to surround me and press chokingly upon my senses. Sleep, I decided, would be out of the question; so I merely extinguished the lamp and threw myself on the bed fully dressed. No doubt it was absurd, but I kept ready for some unknown emergency; gripping in my right hand the revolver I had brought along, and holding the pocket flashlight in my left. Not a sound came from below, and I could imagine how my host was sitting there with cadaverous stiffness in the dark.

Somewhere I heard a clock ticking, and was vaguely grateful for the normality of the sound. It reminded me, though, of another thing about the region which disturbed me—the total absence of animal life. There were certainly no farm beasts about, and now I realised that even the accustomed night-noises of wild living things were absent. Except for the sinister trickle of distant unseen waters, that stillness was anomalous—interplanetary—and I wondered what star-spawned, intangible blight could be hanging over the region. I recalled from old legends that dogs and other beasts had always hated the Outer Ones, and thought of what those tracks in the road might mean.

Do not ask me how long my unexpected lapse into slumber lasted, or how much of what ensued was sheer dream. If I tell you that I awaked at a certain time, and heard and saw certain things, you will merely answer that I did not wake then; and that everything was a dream until the moment when I rushed out of the house, stumbled to the shed where I had seen the old Ford, and seized that ancient vehicle for a mad, aimless race over the haunted hills which at last landed me—after hours of jolting and winding through forest-threatened labyrinths—in a village which turned out to be Townshend.

You will also, of course, discount everything else in my report; and declare that all the pictures, record-sounds, cylinder-and-machine sounds, and kindred evidences were bits of pure deception practiced on me by the missing Henry Akeley. You will even hint that he conspired with other eccentrics to carry out a silly and elaborate hoax—that he had the express shipment removed at

Keene, and that he had Noyes make that terrifying wax record. It is odd, though, that Noyes has not ever yet been identified; that he was unknown at any of the villages near Akeley's place, though he must have been frequently in the region. I wish I had stopped to memorize the license-number of his car—or perhaps it is better after all that I did not. For I, despite all you can say, and despite all I sometimes try to say to myself, know that loathsome outside influences must be lurking there in the half-unknown hills—and that those influences have spies and emissaries in the world of men. To keep as far as possible from such influences and such emissaries is all that I ask of life in future.

When my frantic story sent a sheriff's posse out to the farmhouse, Akeley was gone without leaving a trace. His loose dressing gown, yellow scarf, and foot-bandages lay on the study floor near his corner easy-chair, and it could not be decided whether any of his other apparel had vanished with him. The dogs and livestock were indeed missing, and there were some curious bullet-holes both on the house's exterior and on some of the walls within; but beyond this nothing unusual could be detected. No cylinders or machines, none of the evidences I had brought in my valise, no queer odour or vibration-sense, no foot-prints in the road, and none of the problematical things I glimpsed at the very last.

I stayed a week in Brattleboro after my escape, making inquiries among people of every kind who had known Akeley; and the results convince me that the matter is no figment of dream or delusion. Akeley's queer purchases of dogs and ammunition and chemicals, and the cutting of his telephone wires, are matters of record; while all who knew him—including his son in California—concede that his occasional remarks on strange studies had a certain consistency. Solid citizens believe he was mad, and unhesitatingly pronounce all reported evidences mere hoaxes devised with insane cunning and perhaps abetted by accentric associates; but the lowlier country folk sustain his statements in every detail. He had showed some of these rustics his photographs and black stone, and had played the hideous record for them; and they all said the footprints and buzzing voice were like those described in ancestral legends.

They said, too, that suspicious sights and sounds had been noticed increasingly around Akeley's house after he found the black stone, and that the place was now avoided by everybody

except the mail man and other casual, tough-minded people. Dark Mountain and Round Hill were both notoriously haunted spots, and I could find no one who had ever closely explored either. Occasional disappearances of natives throughout the district's history were well attested, and these now included the semi-vagabond Walter Brown, whom Akeley's letters had mentioned. I even came upon one farmer who thought he had personally glimpsed one of the queer bodies at flood-time in the swollen West River, but his tale was too confused to be really valuable.

When I left Brattleboro I resolved never to go back to Vermont, and I feel quite certain I shall keep my resolution. Those wild hills are surely the outpost of a frightful cosmic race—as I doubt all the less since reading that a new ninth planet has been glimpsed beyond Neptune, just as those influences had said it would be glimpsed. Astronomers, with a hideous appropriateness they little suspect, have named this thing "Pluto." I feel, beyond question, that it is nothing less than nighted Yuggoth—and I shiver when I try to figure out the real reason *why* its monstrous denizens wish it to be known in this way at this especial time. I vainly try to assure myself that these daemonic creatures are not gradually leading up to some new policy hurtful to the earth and its normal inhabitants.

But I have still to tell of the ending of the terrible night in the farmhouse. As I have said, I did finally drop into a troubled doze; a doze filled with bits of dream which involved monstrous landscape-glimpses. Just what awaked me I cannot yet say, but that I did indeed awake at this given point I feel very certain. My first confused impression was of stealthily creaking floor-boards in the hall outside my door, and of a clumsy, muffled fumbling at the latch. This, however, ceased almost at once; so that my really clear impressions begin with the voices heard from the study below. There seemed to be several speakers, and I judged that they were controversially engaged.

By the time I had listened a few seconds I was broad awake, for the nature of the voices was such as to make all thought of sleep ridiculous. The tones were curiously varied, and no one who had listened to that accursed phonograph record could harbour any doubts about the nature of at least two of them. Hideous though the idea was, I knew that I was under the same roof with nameless things from abysmal space; for those two voices were

unmistakably the blasphemous buzzings which the Outside Beings used in their communication with men. The two were individually different—different in pitch, accent, and tempo—but they were both of the same damnable general kind.

A third voice was indubitably that of a mechanical utterance-machine connected with one of the detached brains in the cylinders. There was as little doubt about that as about the buzzings; for the loud, metallic, lifeless voice of the previous evening, with its inflectionless, expressionless scraping and rattling, and its impersonal precision and deliberation, had been utterly unforgettable. For a time I did not pause to question whether the intelligence behind the scraping was the identical one which had formerly talked to me; but shortly afterward I reflected that *any* brain would emit vocal sounds of the same quality if linked to the same mechanical speech-producer; the only possible differences being in language, rhythm, speed, and pronunciation. To complete the eldritch colloquy there were two actually human voices—one the crude speech of an unknown and evidently rustic man, and the other the suave Bostonian tones of my erstwhile guide Noyes.

As I tried to catch the words which the stoutly-fashioned floor so bafflingly intercepted, I was also conscious of a great deal of stirring and scratching and shuffling in the room below; so that I could not escape the impression that it was full of living beings—many more than the few whose speech I could single out. The exact nature of this stirring is extremely hard to describe, for very few good bases of comparison exist. Objects seemed now and then to move across the room like conscious entities; the sound of their footfalls having something about it like a loose, hard-surfaced clattering—as of the contact of ill-coördinated surfaces of horn or hard rubber. It was, to use a more concrete but less accurate comparison, as if people with loose, splintery wooden shoes were shambling and rattling about on the polished board floor. Of the nature and appearance of those responsible for the sounds, I did not care to speculate.

Before long I saw that it would be impossible to distinguish any connected discourse. Isolated words—including the names of Akeley and myself—now and then floated up, especially when uttered by the mechanical speech-producer; but their true significance was lost for want of continuous context. Today I refuse to

form any definite deductions from them, and even their frightful effect on me was one of *suggestion* rather than of *revelation*. A terrible and abnormal conclave, I felt certain, was assembled below me; but for what shocking deliberations I could not tell. It was curious how this unquestioned sense of the malign and the blasphemous pervaded me despite Akeley's assurances of the Outsiders' friendliness.

With patient listening I began to distinguish clearly between voices, even though I could not grasp much of what any of the voices said. I seemed to catch certain typical emotions behind some of the speakers. One of the buzzing voices, for example, held an unmistakable note of authority; whilst the mechanical voice, notwithstanding its artificial loudness and regularity, seemed to be in a position of subordination and pleading. Noyes's tones exuded a kind of conciliatory atmosphere. The others I could make no attempt to interpret. I did not hear the familiar whisper of Akeley, but well knew that such a sound could never penetrate the solid flooring of my room.

I will try to set down some of the few disjointed words and other sounds I caught, labelling the speakers of the words as best I know how. It was from the speech-machine that I first picked up a few recognisable phrases.

(*The Speech-Machine*)

"... brought it on myself ... sent back the letters and the record ... end on it ... taken in ... seeing and hearing ... damn you ... impersonal force, after all ... fresh, shiny cylinder ... great God. ..."

(*First Buzzing Voice*)

"... time we stopped ... small and human ... Akeley ... brain ... saying. ..."

(*Second Buzzing Voice*)

"... Nyarlathotep ... Wilmarth ... records and letters ... cheap imposture. ..."

(Noyes)

" . . . (an unpronounceable word or name, possibly *N'gar-Kthun*) . . . harmless . . . peace . . . couple of weeks . . . theatrical . . . told you that before. . . "

(*First Buzzing Voice*)

" . . . no reason . . . original plan . . . effects . . . Noyes can watch . . . Round Hill . . . fresh cylinder . . . Noyes's car. . . "

(Noyes)

" . . . well . . . all yours . . . down here . . . rest place. . . "

(*Several Voices at Once in Indistinguishable Speech*)

(Many Footsteps, Including the Peculiar Loose Stirring or Clattering)

(*A Curious Sort of Flapping Sound*)

(The Sound of an Automobile Starting and Receding)

(*Silence*)

That is the substance of what my ears brought me as I lay rigid upon that strange upstairs bed in the haunted farmhouse among the daemoniac hills—lay there fully dressed, with a revolver clenched in my right hand and a pocket flashlight gripped in my left. I became, as I have said, broad awake; but a kind of obscure paralysis nevertheless kept me inert till long after the last echoes of the sounds had died away. I heard the wooden, deliberate ticking of the ancient Connecticut clock somewhere far below, and at last made out the irregular snoring of a sleeper. Akeley must have dozed off after the strange session, and I could well believe that he needed to do so.

Just what to think or what to do was more than I could decide. After all, what *had* I heard beyond things which previous infor-

mation might have led me to expect? Had I not known that the nameless Outsiders were now freely admitted to the farmhouse? No doubt Akeley had been surprised by an unexpected visit from them. Yet something in that fragmentary discourse had chilled me immeasurably, raised the most grotesque and horrible doubts, and made me wish fervently that I might wake up and prove everything a dream. I think my subconscious mind must have caught something which my consciousness has not yet recognised. But what of Akeley? Was he not my friend, and would he not have protested if any harm were meant me? The peaceful snoring below seemed to cast ridicule on all my suddenly intensified fears.

Was it possible that Akeley had been imposed upon and used as a lure to draw me into the hills with the letters and pictures and phonograph record? Did those beings mean to engulf us both in a common destruction because we had come to know too much? Again I thought of the abruptness and unnaturalness of that change in the situation which must have occurred between Akeley's penultimate and final letters. Something, my instinct told me, was terribly wrong. All was not as it seemed. That acrid coffee which I refused—had there not been an attempt by some hidden, unknown entity to drug it? I must talk to Akeley at once, and restore his sense of proportion. They had hypnotised him with their promises of cosmic revelations, but now he must listen to reason. We must get out of this before it would be too late. If he lacked the will power to make the break for liberty, I would supply it. Or if I could not persuade him to go, I could at least go myself. Surely he would let me take his Ford and leave it in a garage at Brattleboro. I had noticed it in the shed—the door being left unlocked and open now that peril was deemed past—and I believed there was a good chance of its being ready for instant use. That momentary dislike of Akeley which I had felt during and after the evening's conversation was all gone now. He was in a position much like my own, and we must stick together. Knowing his indisposed condition, I hated to wake him at this juncture, but I knew that I must. I could not stay in this place till morning as matters stood.

At last I felt able to act, and stretched myself vigorously to regain command of my muscles. Arising with a caution more impulsive than deliberate, I found and donned my hat, took my valise, and started downstairs with the flashlight's aid. In my nervousness I kept the revolver clutched in my right hand, being

able to take care of both valise and flashlight with my left. Why I exerted these precautions I do not really know, since I was even then on my way to awaken the only other occupant of the house.

As I half-tiptoed down the creaking stairs to the lower hall I could hear the sleeper more plainly, and noticed that he must be in the room on my left—the living-room I had not entered. On my right was the gaping blackness of the study in which I had heard the voices. Pushing open the unlatched door of the living-room I traced a path with the flashlight toward the source of the snoring, and finally turned the beams on the sleeper's face. But in the next second I hastily turned them away and commenced a catlike retreat to the hall, my caution this time springing from reason as well as from instinct. For the sleeper on the couch was not Akeley at all, but my quondam guide Noyes.

Just what the real situation was, I could not guess; but common sense told me that the safest thing was to find out as much as possible before arousing anybody. Regaining the hall, I silently closed and latched the living-room door after me; thereby lessening the chances of awakening Noyes. I now cautiously entered the dark study, where I expected to find Akeley, whether asleep or awake, in the great corner chair which was evidently his favorite resting-place. As I advanced, the beams of my flashlight caught the great centre-table, revealing one of the hellish cylinders with sight and hearing machines attached, and with a speech machine standing close by, ready to be connected at any moment. This, I reflected, must be the encased brain I had heard talking during the frightful conference; and for a second I had a perverse impulse to attach the speech machine and see what it would say.

It must, I thought, be conscious of my presence even now; since the sight and hearing attachments could not fail to disclose the rays of my flashlight and the faint creaking of the floor beneath my feet. But in the end I did not dare meddle with the thing. I idly saw that it was the fresh shiny cylinder with Akeley's name on it, which I had noticed on the shelf earlier in the evening and which my host had told me not to bother. Looking back at that moment, I can only regret my timidity and wish that I had boldly caused the apparatus to speak. God knows what mysteries and horrible doubts and questions of identity it might have cleared up! But then, it may be merciful that I let it alone.

From the table I turned my flashlight to the corner where I

thought Akeley was, but found to my perplexity that the great easy-chair was empty of any human occupant asleep or awake. From the seat to the floor there trailed voluminously the familiar old dressing-gown, and near it on the floor lay the yellow scarf and the huge foot-bandages I had thought so odd. As I hesitated, striving to conjecture where Akeley might be, and why he had so suddenly discarded his necessary sick-room garments, I observed that the queer odour and sense of vibration were no longer in the room. What had been their cause? Curiously it occurred to me that I had noticed them only in Akeley's vicinity. They had been strongest where he sat, and wholly absent except in the room with him or just outside the doors of that room. I paused, letting the flashlight wander about the dark study and racking my brain for explanations of the turn affairs had taken.

Would to Heaven I had quietly left the place before allowing that light to rest again on the vacant chair. As it turned out, I did not leave quietly; but with a muffled shriek which must have disturbed, though it did not quite awake, the sleeping sentinel across the hall. That shriek, and Noyes's still-unbroken snore, are the last sounds I ever heard in that morbidity-choked farmhouse beneath the black-wooded crest of haunted mountain—that focus of transcosmic horror amidst the lonely green hills and cursemuttering brooks of a spectral rustic land.

It is a wonder that I did not drop flashlight, valise, and revolver in my wild scramble, but somehow I failed to lose any of these. I actually managed to get out of that room and that house without making any further noise, to drag myself and my belongings safely into the old Ford in the shed, and to set that archaic vehicle in motion toward some unknown point of safety in the black, moonless night. The ride that followed was a piece of delirium out of Poe or Rimbaud or the drawings of Doré, but finally I reached Townshend. That is all. If my sanity is still unshaken, I am lucky. Sometimes I fear what the years will bring, especially since that new planet Pluto has been so curiously discovered.

As I have implied, I let my flashlight return to the vacant easychair after its circuit of the room; then noticing for the first time the presence of certain objects in the seat, made inconspicuous by the adjacent loose folds of the empty dressing-gown. These are the objects, three in number, which the investigators did not find when they came later on. As I said at the outset,

there was nothing of actual visual horror about them. The trouble was in what they led one to infer. Even how I have my moments of half-doubt—moments in which I half-accept the scepticism of those who attribute my whole experience to dream and nerves and delusion.

The three things were damnably clever constructions of their kind, and were furnished with ingenious metallic clamps to attach them to organic developments of which I dare not form any conjecture. I hope—devoutly hope—that they were the waxen products of a master artist, despite what my inmost fears tell me. Great God! That whisperer in darkness with its morbid odour and vibrations! Sorcerer, emissary, changeling, outsider . . . that hideous repressed buzzing . . . and all the time in that fresh, shiny cylinder on the shelf . . . poor devil . . . "Prodigious surgical, biological, chemical, and mechanical skill. . . ."

For the things in the chair, perfect to the last, subtle detail of microscopic resemblance—or identity—were the face and hands of Henry Wentworth Akeley.

Edmond Hamilton (1905-) has contributed not only to the development of science fiction but also to the accumulation of a recognized body of fiction of intrinsic merit. There is no inconsistency in the fact that certain early writers of magazine science fiction, like Hamilton, standardized the clichés for which science fiction is frequently rebuked at the same time as they produced outstanding stories. Such a gem is "The Man Who Saw the Future."

The Man Who Saw the Future

BY EDMOND HAMILTON

Jean de Marselait, Inquisitor Extraordinary of the King of France, raised his head from the parchments that littered the crude desk at which he sat. His glance shifted along the long stone-walled, torchlit room to the file of mail-clad soldiers who stood like steel statues by its door. A word from him and two of them sprang forward.

"You may bring in the prisoner," he said.

The two disappeared through the door and in moments more came a clang of opening bolts and grating of heavy hinges from somewhere in the building. Then the clang of the returning soldiers, and they entered the room with another man between them whose hands were fettered.

He was a straight figure, and was dressed in drab tunic and hose. His dark hair was long and straight, and his face held a dreaming strength, altogether different from the battered visages of the soldiers or the changeless mask of the Inquisitor. The latter regarded the prisoner for a moment, and then lifted one of the parchments from before him and read from it in a smooth, clear voice.

"Henri Lothiere, apothecary's assistant of Paris," he read, "is charged in this year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and forty-four with offending against God and the king by committing the crime of sorcery."

The prisoner spoke for the first time, his voice low but steady. "I am no sorcerer, sire."

Jean de Marselait read calmly on from the parchment. "It is stated by many witnesses that for long that part of Paris, called Nanley by some, has been troubled by works of the devil. Ever and anon great claps of thunder have been heard issuing from an open field there without visible cause. They were evidently caused by a sorcerer of power since even exorcists could not halt them.

"It is attested by many that the accused, Henri Lothiere, did in spite of the known diabolical nature of the thing, spend much time at the field in question. It is also attested that the said Henri Lothiere did state that in his opinion the thunderclaps were not of diabolical origin, and that if they were studied, their cause might be discovered.

"It being suspected from this that Henri Lothiere was himself the sorcerer causing the thunderclaps, he was watched and on the third day of June was seen to go in the early morning to the unholy spot with certain instruments. There he was observed going through strange and diabolical conjurations, when there came suddenly another thunderclap and the said Henri Lothiere did vanish entirely from view in that moment. This fact is attested beyond all doubt.

"The news spreading, many hundreds watched around the field during that day. Upon that night before midnight, another thunderclap was heard and the said Henri Lothiere was seen by these hundreds to appear at the field's center as swiftly and as strangely as he had vanished. The fear-stricken hundreds around the field heard him tell them how, by diabolical power, he had gone for hundreds of years into the future, a thing surely possible only to the devil and his minions, and heard him tell other blasphemies before they seized him and brought him to the Inquisitor of the King, praying that he be burned and his work of sorcery thus halted.

"Therefore, Henri Lothiere, since you were seen to vanish and to reappear as only the servants of the evil one might do, and were

heard by many to utter the blasphemies mentioned, I must adjudge you a sorcerer with the penalty of death by fire. If anything there be that you can advance in palliation of your black offense, however, you may now do so before final sentence is passed upon you."

Jean de Marselait laid down the parchment, and raised his eyes to the prisoner. The latter looked round him quickly for a moment, a half-glimpsed panic for an instant in his eyes, then seemed to steady.

"Sire, I cannot change the sentence you will pass upon me," he said quietly, "yet do I wish well to relate once, what happened to me and what I saw. Is it permitted me to tell that from first to last?"

The Inquisitor's head bent, and Henri Lothiere spoke, his voice gaining in strength and fervor as he continued.

"Sire, I, Henri Lothiere, am no sorcerer but a simple apothecary's assistant. It was always my nature, from earliest youth, to desire to delve into matters unknown to men; the secrets of the earth and sea and sky, the knowledge hidden from us. I knew well that this was wicked, that the Church teaches all we need to know and that heaven frowns when we pry into its mysteries, but so strong was my desire to know, that many times I concerned myself with matters forbidden.

"I had sought to know the nature of the lighting, and the manner of flight of the birds, and the way in which fishes are able to live beneath the waters, and the mystery of the stars. So when these thunderclaps began to be heard in the part of Paris in which I lived, I did not fear them so much as my neighbors. I was eager to learn only what was causing them, for it seemed to me that their cause might be learned.

"So I began to go to that field from which they issued, to study them. I waited in it and twice I heard the great thunderclaps myself. I thought they came from near the field's center, and I studied that place. But I could see nothing there that was causing them. I dug in the ground, I looked up for hours into the sky, but there was nothing. And still, at intervals, the thunderclaps sounded.

"I still kept going to the field, though I knew that many of my

neighbors whispered that I was engaged in sorcery. Upon that morning of the third day of June, it had occurred to me to take certain instruments, such as loadstones, to the field, to see whether anything might be learned with them. I went, a few superstitious ones following me at a distance. I reached the field's center, and started the examinations I had planned. Then came suddenly another thunderclap and with it I passed from the sight of those who had followed and were watching, vanished from view.

"Sire, I cannot well describe what happened in that moment. I heard the thunderclap come as though from all the air around me, stunning my ears with its terrible burst of sound. And at the same moment that I heard it, I was buffeted as though by awful winds and seemed falling downward through terrific depths. Then through the hellish uproar, I felt myself bumping upon a hard surface, and the sounds quickly ceased from about me.

"I had involuntarily closed my eyes at the great thunderclap, but now, slowly, I opened them. I looked around me, first in stupefaction, and then in growing amazement. For I was not in that familiar field at all, Sire, that I had been in a moment before. I was in a room, lying upon its floor, and it was such a room as I had never seen before.

"It's walls were smooth and white and gleaming. There were windows in the walls, and they were closed with sheets of glass so smooth and clear that one seemed looking through a clear opening rather than through glass. The floor was of stone, smooth and seamless as though carved from one great rock, yet seeming not, in some way, to be stone at all. There was a great circle of smooth metal inset in it, and it was on it that I was lying.

"All around the room were many great things the like of which I had never seen. Some seemed of black metal, seemed contrivances or machines of some sort. Black cords or wire connected them to each other and from part of them came a humming sound that did not stop. Others had glass tubes fixed on the front of them, and there were square black plates on which were many shining little handles and buttons.

"There was a sound of voices, and I turned to find that two men were bending over me. They were men like myself, yet they were at the same time like no men I had ever met! One was white-bearded and the other plump and bare of face. Neither of them

wore cloak or tunic or hose. Instead they wore loose and straight-hanging garments of cloth.

"They were both greatly excited, it seemed, and were talking to each other as they bent over me. I caught a word or two of their speech in a moment, and found it was French they were talking. But it was not the French I knew, being so strange and with so many new words as to be almost a different language. I could understand the drift, though, of what they were saying.

"We have succeeded!" the plump one was shouting excitedly. "We've brought someone through at last!"

"They will never believe it," the other replied. "They'll say it was faked."

"Nonsense!" cried the first. "We can do it again, Rastin; we can show them before their own eyes!"

"They bent toward me, seeing me staring at them.

"Where are you from?" shouted the plump-faced one. "What time—what year—what century?"

"He doesn't understand, Thicourt," muttered the white-bearded one. "What year is this now, my friend?" he asked me.

"I found voice to answer. 'Surely, sirs, whoever you be, you know that this is the year fourteen hundred and forty-four,' I said.

"That set them off again into a babble of excited talk, of which I could make out only a word here and there. They lifted me up, seeing how sick and weak I felt, and seated me in a strange, but very comfortable chair. I felt dazed. The two were still talking excitedly, but finally the white-bearded one, Rastin, turned to me. He spoke to me, very slowly, so that I understood him clearly, and he asked me my name. I told him.

"Henri Lothiere," he repeated. "Well, Henri you must try to understand. You are not now in the year 1444. You are five hundred years in the future, or what would seem to you the future. This is the year 1944."

"And Rastin and I have jerked you out of your own time across five solid centuries," said the other, grinning.

"I looked from one to the other. 'Messieurs,' I pleaded, and Rastin shook his head.

"He does not believe," he said to the other. Then to me, "Where were you just before you found yourself here, Henri?" he asked.

"In a field at the outskirts of Paris," I said.

"Well, look from that window and see if you still believe yourself in your 15th century Paris."

"I went to the window. I looked out. Mother of God, what a sight before my eyes! The familiar gray little houses, the open fields behind them, the saunterers in the dirt streets—all these were gone and it was a new and terrible city that lay about me! Its broad streets were of stone and great buildings of many levels rose on either side of them. Great numbers of people dressed like the two beside me, moved in the streets and also strange vehicles or carriages, undrawn by horse or ox, that rushed to and fro at undreamed-of speed! I staggered back to the chair.

"You believe now, Henri?" asked the white beard, Rastin, kindly enough, and I nodded weakly. My brain was whirling.

"He pointed to the circle of metal on the floor and the machines around the room. 'Those are what we used to jerk you from your own time to this one,' he said.

"But how, sirs?" I asked. 'For the love of God, how is it that you can take me from one time to another? Have ye become gods or devils?'

"Neither the one nor the other, Henri,' he answered. 'We are simply scientists, physicists—men who want to know as much as man can know and who spend our lives in seeking knowledge.'

"I felt my confidence returning. These were men such as I had dreamed might some day be. 'But what can you do with time?' I asked. 'Is not time a thing unalterable, unchanging?'

"Both shook their heads. 'No, Henri, it is not. But lately have our men of science found that out.'

"They went on to tell me of things that I could not understand. It seemed they were telling that their men of knowledge had found time to be a mere measurement, or dimension, just as length or breadth or thickness. They mentioned names with reverence that I had never heard—Einstein and De Sitter and Lorentz. I was in a maze at their words.

"They said that just as men use force to move or rotate matter from one point along the three known measurements to another, so might matter be rotated from one point in time, the fourth measurement, to another, if the right force were used. They said that their machines produced that force and applied it to the metal circle from five hundred years before to this time of theirs.

"They had tried it many times, they said, but nothing had been on the spot at that time and they had rotated nothing but the air above it from the one time to the other, and the reverse. I told them of the thunderclaps that had been heard at the spot in the field and that had made me curious. They said that they had been caused by the changing of the air above the spot from the one time to the other in their trials. I could not understand these things.

"They said then that I had happened to be on the spot when they had again turned on their force and so had been rotated out of my own time into theirs. They said that they had always hoped to get someone living from a distant time in that way, since such a man would be a proof to all the other men of knowledge of what they had been able to do.

"I could not comprehend, and they saw and told me not to fear, I was not fearful, but excited at the things that I saw around me. I asked of those things and Rastin and Thicourt laughed and explained some of them to me as best they could. Much they said that I did not understand but my eyes saw marvels in that room of which I had never dreamed.

"They showed me a thing like a small glass bottle with wires inside, and then told me to touch a button beneath it. I did so and the bottle shone with a brilliant light exceeding that of scores of candles. I shrank back, but they laughed, and when Rastin touched the button again, the light in the glass thing vanished. I saw that there were many of these things in the ceiling.

"They showed me also a rounded black object of metal with a wheel at the end. A belt ran around the wheel and around smaller wheels connected to many machines. They touched a lever on this object and a sound of humming came from it and the wheel turned very fast, turning all the machines with the belt. It turned faster than any man could ever have turned it, yet when they touched the lever again, its turning ceased. They said that it was the power of the lightning in the skies that they used to make the light and to turn that wheel.

"My brain reeled at the wonders that they showed. One took an instrument from the table that he held to his face, saying that he would summon the other scientists or men of knowledge to see their experiment that night. He spoke into the instrument as though to different men, and let me hear voices from it answering

him! They said that the men who answered were leagues separated from him!

"I could not believe—and yet somehow I did believe! I was half-dazed with wonder and yet excited too. The white-bearded man, Rastin, saw that, and encouraged me. Then they brought a small box with an opening and placed a black disk on the box, and set it turning in some way. A woman's voice came from the opening of the box, singing. I shuddered when they told me that the woman was one who had died years before. Could the dead speak thus?

"How can I describe what I saw there? Another box or cabinet there was, with an opening also. I thought it was like that from which it had heard the dead woman singing, but they said it was different. They touched buttons on it and a voice came from it speaking in a tongue I knew not. They said that the man was speaking thousands of leagues from us, in a strange land across the uncrossed western ocean, yet he seemed speaking by my side!

"They saw how dazed I was by these things, and gave me wine. At that I took heart, for wine, at least, was as it had always been.

"You will want to see Paris—the Paris of our time, Henri?" asked Rastin.

"But it is different—terrible—" I said.

"We'll take you," Thicourt said, "but first your clothes—"

"He got a long light coat that they had me put on, that covered my tunic and hose, and a hat of grotesque round shape that they put on my head. They led me then out of the building and into the street.

"I gazed astoundedly along that street. It had a raised walk at either side, on which many hundreds of people moved to and fro, all dressed in as strange a fashion. Many, like Rastin and Thicourt, seemed of gentle blood, yet, in spite of this, they did not wear a sword or even a dagger. There were no knights or squires, or priests or peasants. All seemed dressed much the same.

"Small lads ran to and fro selling what seemed sheets of very thin white parchment, many times folded and covered with lettering. Rastin said that these had written in them all things that had

happened through all the world, even but hours before. I said that to write even one of these sheets would take a clerk many days, but they said that the writing was done in some way very quickly by machines.

"In the broad stone street between the two raised walks were rushing back and forth the strange vehicles I had seen from the window. There was no animal pulling or pushing any one of them, yet they never halted their swift rush, and carried many people at unthinkable speed. Sometimes those who walked stepped before the rushing vehicles, and then from them came terrible warning snarls or moans that made the walkers draw back.

"One of the vehicles stood at the walk's edge before us, and we entered it and sat side by side on a soft leather seat. Thicourt sat behind a wheel on a post, with levers beside him. He touched these and a humming sound came from somewhere in the vehicle and then it too began to rush forward. Faster and faster along the street it went, yet neither of them seemed afraid.

"Many thousands of these vehicles were moving swiftly through the streets about us. We passed on, between great buildings and along wider streets, my eyes and ears numbed by what I saw about me. Then the buildings grew smaller, after we had gone for miles through them, and we were passing through the city's outskirts. I could not believe, hardly, that it was Paris in which I was.

"We came to a great flat and open field outside the city and there Thicourt stopped and we got out of the vehicle. There were big buildings at the field's end, and I saw other vehicles rolling out of them across the field, ones different from any I had yet seen, with flat winglike projections on either side. They rolled out over the field very fast and then I cried out as I saw them rising from the ground into the air. Mother of God, they were flying! The men in them were flying!

"Rastin and Thicourt took me forward to the great buildings. They spoke to men there and one brought forward one of the winged cars. Rastin told me to get in, and though I was terribly afraid, there was too terrible a fascination that drew me in. Thicourt and Rastin entered after me, and we sat in seats with the other man. He had before him levers and buttons, while at the car's front was a great thing like a double-oar or paddle. A loud roaring came and that double-blade began to whirl so swiftly that

I could not see it. Then the car rolled swiftly forward, bumping on the ground, and then ceased to bump. I looked down, then shuddered. The ground was already far beneath! I too, was flying in the air!

"We swept upward at terrible speed, that increased steadily. The thunder of the car was terrific, and as the man at the levers changed their position, we curved around and over downward and upward as though birds. Rastin tried to explain to me how the car flew, but it was all too wonderful, and I could not understand. I only knew that a wild thrilling excitement held me, and that it were worth life and death to fly thus, if but for once, as I had always dreamed that men might some day do.

"Higher and higher we went. The earth lay far beneath and I saw now that Paris was indeed a mighty city, its vast mass of buildings stretching away almost to the horizons below us. A mighty city of the future that it had been given my eyes to look on!

"There were other winged cars darting to and fro in the air about us, and they said that many of these were starting or finishing journeys of hundreds of leagues in the air. Then I cried out as I saw a great shape coming nearer us in the air. It was many rods in length, tapering to a point at both ends, a vast ship sailing in the air! There were great cabins on its lower part and in them we glimpsed people gazing out, coming and going inside, dancing even! They told me that vast ships of the air like this sailed to and fro for thousands of leagues with hundreds inside them.

"The huge vessel of the air passed us and then our winged car began to descend. It circled smoothly down to the field like a swooping bird, and, when we landed there, Rastin and Thicourt led me back to the ground-vehicle. It was late afternoon by then, the sun sinking westward, and darkness had descended by the time we rolled back into the great city.

"But in that city was not darkness! Lights were everywhere in it, flashing brilliant lights that shone from its mighty buildings and that blinked and burned and ran like water in great symbols upon the buildings above the streets. Their glare was like that of day! We stopped before a great building into which Rastin and Thicourt led me.

"It was vast inside and in it were many people in rows on rows of seats. I thought it a cathedral at first but saw soon that it was not. The wall at one end of it, toward which all in it were gazing,

had on it pictures of people, great in size, and those pictures were moving as though themselves alive! And they were talking one to another, too, as though with living voices! I trembled. What magic!

"With Rastin and Thicourt in seats beside me, I watched the pictures enthralled. It was like looking through a great window into strange worlds. I saw the sea, seemingly tossing and roaring there before me, and then saw on it a ship, a vast ship of size incredible, without sails or oars, holding thousands of people. I seemed on that ship as I watched, seemed moving forward with it. They told me it was sailing over the western ocean that never men had crossed. I feared!

"Then another scene, land appearing from the ship. A great statue, upholding a torch, and we on the ship seemed passing beneath it. They said that the ship was approaching a city, the city of New York, but mists hid all before us. Then suddenly the mists before the ship cleared and there before me seemed the city.

"Mother of God, what a city! Climbing range on range of great mountain-like buildings that aspired up as though to scale heaven itself! Far beneath narrow streets pierced through them and in the picture we seemed to land from the ship, to go through those streets of the city. It was an incredible city of madness! The streets and ways were mere chasms between the sky-toppling buildings! People—people—people—millions on millions of them rushed through the endless streets. Countless ground-vehicles rushed to and fro also, and other different ones that roared above the streets and still others below them!

"Winged flying-cars and great airships were sailing to and fro over the titanic city, and in the waters around it great ships of the sea and smaller ships were coming as man never dreamed of surely, that reached out from the mighty city on all sides. And with the coming of darkness, the city blazed with living light!

"The pictures changed, showed other mighty cities, though none so terrible as that one. It showed great mechanisms that appalled me. Giant metal things that scooped in an instant from the earth as much as a man might dig in days. Vast things that poured molten metal from them like water. Others that lifted loads that hundreds of men and oxen could not have stirred.

"They showed men of knowledge like Rastin and Thicourt beside me. Some were healers, working miraculous cures in a way that I could not understand. Others were gazing through giant tubes at the stars, and the pictures showed what they saw, showed that all of the stars were great suns like our sun, and that our sun was greater than earth, that earth moved around it instead of the reversel How could such things be, I wondered. Yet they said that it was so, that earth was round like an apple, and that with other earths like it, the planets, moved round the sun. I heard, but could scarce understand.

"At last Rastin and Thicourt led me out of that place of living pictures and to their ground-vehicle. We went again through the streets to their buildings, where first I had found myself. As we went I saw that none challenged my right to go, nor asked who was my lord. And Rastin said that none now had lords, but that all were lord, king and priest and noble, having no more power than any in the land. Each man was his own master! It was what I had hardly dared to hope for, in my own time, and this, I thought, was greatest of all the marvels they had shown me!

"We entered again their building but Rastin and Thicourt took me first to another room than the one in which I had found myself. They said that their men of knowledge were gathered there to hear of their feat, and to have it proved to them.

"'You would not be afraid to return to your own time, Henri?' asked Rastin, and I shook my head.

"'I want to return to it,' I told them. 'I want to tell my people there what I have seen—what the future is that they must strive for.'

"'But if they should not believe you?' Thicourt asked.

"'Still I must go—must tell them,' I said.

"Rastin grasped my hand. 'You are a man, Henri,' he said. Then, throwing aside the cloak and hat I had worn outside, they went with me down to the big white-walled room where first I had found myself.

"It was lit brightly now by many of the shining glass things on ceiling and walls, and in it were many men. They all stared strangely at me and at my clothes, and talked excitedly so fast that I could not understand. Rastin began to address them.

"He seemed explaining how he had brought me from my own time to his. He used many terms and words that I could not understand, incomprehensible references and phrases, and I

could understand but little. I heard again the names of Einstein and De Sitter that I had heard before, repeated frequently by these men as they disputed with Rastin and Thicourt. They seemed disputing about me.

"One big man was saying, 'Impossible! I tell you, Rastin, you have faked this fellow!'

"Rastin smiled. 'You don't believe that Thicourt and I brought him here from his own time across five centuries?'

"A chorus of excited negatives answered him. He had me stand up and speak to them. They asked me many questions, part of which I could not understand. I told them of my life, and of the city of my own time, and of king and priest and noble, and of many simple things that they seemed quite ignorant of. Some appeared to believe me but others did not, and again their dispute broke out.

"There is a way to settle the argument, gentlemen,' said Rastin finally.

"How?' all cried.

"Thicourt and I brought Henri across five centuries by rotating the time-dimensions at this spot,' he said. 'Suppose we reverse that rotation and send him back before your eyes—would that be proof?'

"They all said that it would. Rastin turned to me. 'Stand on the metal circle, Henri,' he said. I did so.

"All were watching very closely. Thicourt did something quickly with the levers and buttons of the mechanisms in the room. They began to hum, and blue light came from the glass tubes on some. All were quiet watching me as I stood there on the circle of metal. I met Rastin's eyes and something in me made me call goodbye to him. He waved his hand and smiled. Thicourt pressed more buttons and the hum of the mechanisms grew louder. Then he reached toward another lever. All in the room were tense and I was tense.

"Then I saw Thicourt's arm move as he turned one of the many levers.

"A terrific clap of thunder seemed to break around me, and as I closed my eyes before its shock, I felt myself whirling around and falling at the same time as though into a maelstrom, just as I had done before. The awful falling sensation ceased in a moment and the sound subsided. I opened my eyes. I was on the ground at the center of the familiar field from which I had vanished hours

before, upon the morning of that day. It was night now, though, for that day I had spent five hundred years in the future.

"There were many people gathered around the field, fearful, and they screamed and some fled when I appeared in the thunderclap. I went toward those who remained. My mind was full of things I had seen and I wanted to tell them of these things. I wanted to tell them how they must work ever toward that future time of wonder.

"But they did not listen. Before I had spoken minutes to them they cried out on me as a sorcerer and a blasphemer, and seized me and brought me here to the Inquisitor, to you, sire. And to you, sire, I have told the truth in all things. I know that in doing so I have set the seal of my own fate, and that only sorcerer would ever tell such a tale, yet despite that I am glad. Glad that I have told one at least of this time of what I saw five centuries in the future. Glad that I saw! Glad that I saw the things that someday, sometime, must come to be—"

It was a week later that they burned Henri Lothiere. Jean de Marselait, lifting his gaze from his endless parchment accusation and examens on that afternoon, looked out through the window at a thick curl of black smoke going up from the distant square.

"Strange, that one," he mused. "A sorcerer, of course, but such a one as I had never heard before. I wonder," he half-whispered, "was there any truth in that wild tale of his? The future—who can say—what men might do—?"

There was silence in the room as he brooded for a moment, and then he shook himself as one ridding himself of absurd speculations. "But tush—enough of these crazy fancies. They will have me for a sorcerer if I yield to these wild fancies and visions of the *futicre*."

And bending again with his pen to the parchment before him, he went gravely on with his work.

Harl Vincent (1893-) is actually Harl Vincent Shoepflin. Starting in 1928, with the publication of a novelette called "The Golden Girl of Munan," the signature of Harl Vincent has commanded considerable respect in science fiction. Because he stopped writing in 1941, before science-fiction anthologies became popular, his better works have not been reprinted; but the richness of imagination and the adroitness of his construction in "Prowler of the Wastelands" underscores that he deserves not to be neglected.

Prowler of the Wastelands

BY HARL VINCENT

The prowler sniffed of the breeze suspiciously. Its warmth was most gratifying, for he had traveled day and night from the northern wastes where the bitter chill of an early winter was already a threat to his very existence.

But this breeze carried to his sensitive nostrils an assortment of smells that made him uneasy and fearful. Uneasy, because they roused in his memory faint recollections which antedated his first clumsy scamperings at the side of his mother, who had long since died. Fearful, because they were entirely unfamiliar in any experience of his maturity.

He did not know that the smells betokened his nearness to man's greatest place of habitation. In fact, the prowler would not have recognized man as such had a representative of the breed appeared in the brush beside him. He had never seen a man.

A peculiarly lonely creature, the prowler, since he was the only one of his kind in the vastness of the wastelands. His three short years, since leaving his mother cold and still in the northern snows, had comprised a ceaseless search for food. The wild dogs, which were the only other creatures of any size in all the wastelands, had early learned to avoid him. The prowler was more

than a match for the fiercest of them, even when they attacked him in a pack.

He was a yellow-furred hybrid, essentially feline in appearance—one hundred and thirty pounds of him. Besides being of mixed ancestry, he was possessed of transplanted glands from various species and of genes which provided him with instincts which had not as yet been aroused. The prowler could not know that he was the product of a twenty-third century biological experiment.

Many hours had passed since he had last tasted food, and the agonized gnawing at his vitals caused him to forget his misgivings regarding the smells. He padded swiftly south and east in the direction from which they were drifting. The brush was bare and dry; fallen leaves carpeted the ground. There was no sound of life save the distant baying of a pack of wild dogs. Still the prowler went on.

Presently he saw a cluster of huge mounds and his pace quickened. He did not know that the mounds had been formed by the crumbling walls of ancient dwelling places of man, but he did know that there were many more such clusters of them in the wastelands. And he knew there would be rats in the diggings beneath them. He disappeared into what had once been the cellar of a Hoboken warehouse.

An hour later, his hunger appeased, he crept out into the fading light of day. He sniffed of the breeze, which now had cooled somewhat. The smells were stronger than before, and now they piqued his curiosity; more, they drew him almost irresistibly. He picked his way rapidly through the moss-covered ruins and at length came to an open space where the view stopped him in his tracks. Puzzled by the vast strangeness that lay before him, he sat on his haunches and stared.

He was at the edge of a broad expanse of water, and across it was a towering wall that gleamed dazzlingly in the light of the setting sun. The prowler could not know that this was the Hudson River separating him from what was the west barrier of New York, the greatest of the eleven cities of United North America. He could not know that the sweeping line of hundred-level-high habitations which housed nearly fifty millions of humans was the place of his birth, nor that the arched bottomings of the sweep which crossed the river swung it southwestward to include what had once been the cities of Jersey City and Newark. He knew only that the smells and the very sight of the magnificent bulwark

drew him and tugged at heartstrings that were within his being unknown and unsuspected.

He knew nothing of history. The ruins and desolation of the wastelands he had taken as a matter of course. That the desertion of the land by humans and the concentration of them in the cities was in any way connected with the mystery of his own existence could not occur as a sequence of thoughts in his synthetic mind.

The prowler did have a mind. A mind imbued with polyglot ideas culled from the knowledge of masters of the world's learning, and with instincts and desires and qualities ordinarily only possessed by the race of man. A mind imbued with dormant instincts and desires and qualities now ready for the awakening.

Rising from his haunches, he resumed his steady padding. The way led southward along the river, and as he progressed the smells of man's habitation grew ever more an anæsthetic in his nostrils. It was imperative that he find what was at the end of this trail.

He did find it. Where the sweep of the city bulwark meets the west shore of the Hudson, where once was the Erie Station on the long-forgotten Hudson and Manhattan tube, the prowler found an open door in the great curving wall of noncorrosive steel. The smells were much more in evidence here. He sniffed and remembered more poignantly his earliest days. Dangling from his mother's mouth, before his eyes first opened to the sights of the world, he had left this place. A fugitive, though he knew it not, from a life created and meticulously planned for in one of man's laboratories.

The noises that came to his ears brought fainter recollection than had the smells, although his memory stirred vaguely with the musical purr of the city's vital machinery. The shrill sound of cars passing through the pneumatic tubes and the swish of swiftly-moving lifts meant still less to him. But a strange urge was upon him; he could not resist the call of whatever was inside. He passed through the door.

In the corridor the sounds and the smells were overpowering in their influence on the prowler. Dazed, and with his heart pounding a tattoo within his deep chest, he moved silently and with increased speed toward the far point where lights were brighter. The smooth, hard metal was comfortably warm under his cush-

ioned paws; the air he breathed was moistly redolent of life—of the life he suddenly knew he was a part of by right of birth.

He rounded a corner and blinked in the dazzling illumination that struck down on him from high above. This was an enormous place he had come into, one of the public squares of the lowest level of the city; it was swarming with creatures, some of whom lived and breathed, some of which were ponderous yet dexterously moving mechanisms. Instinctively, the prowler knew the difference between man and robot.

No creatures like these were in the wastelands. These creatures walked erect on their hind legs, the living ones and the machines alike. And those that lived were friends, the prowler knew; they were the sort he had unconsciously sought for three years. The others he was not so sure about. A longing to be with these erect, living creatures came to him so strongly that he forgot his outland caution and padded out between the pillars and into the brilliance of the open space. One of the metal creatures, clanking at each step, lashed out with a writhing something that was like a wind-whipped vine. It stung cruelly when it struck home and set the prowler back on his haunches, snarling.

He came out of his daze in an instant, and was in the air as if propelled by a huge steel spring, hurling himself against the barrel-like torso of the metal one. His unsheathed claws slithered over the smooth cylinder harmlessly, but the robot toppled heavily to the floor. Something tinkled as it smashed and the thing was quiet underneath him.

Others of the creatures who walked erect but had no life in them were rushing toward him, but some of the living ones were here as well. There were raucous sounds from the first, loud but reassuring shoutings from the others. These shoutings were not like the baying of wild dogs; they were purposeful and confident. Somehow they conveyed understanding. The metal ones fell back and stood stiffly inactive.

One of the men, a leader among the group, had called off the robot police. "So help me," he said, "it's one of Rosso's animals." He reached down and patted the head of the prowler, who immediately relaxed his tensed muscles.

"What's it to us?" another replied. "They shouldn't let 'em run loose like this."

"They don't," retorted the first. "They guard them day and night; the beasts are valuable. That's what makes me think some-

thing is queer about this. Maybe we can turn it to our advantage."

"Meaning what?"

"A reward." The first man was examining one of the prowler's silken ears.

The great yellow-furred animal closed his eyes contentedly. He had returned at last to his rightful home and was among the kind to whom he belonged. His wanderings were over. An awakening inner consciousness told him these things definitely and he gave himself to a sense of peace and security he had never known. He looked gratefully into the eyes of the one who fingered his ear.

"Hm-m-m," the man grunted. "Almost seems as if he wanted to talk to us. Beauty, isn't he?"

The others of the living ones who walked erect were moving away, losing interest, but the first one continued his fingering of the ear. At last he clucked with satisfaction.

"Found your number, big fellow," he told the prowler. "Come on, we'll get in touch with the great Rosso."

Somehow the words made sense. The prowler rose to his feet and kept close to the feet of his benefactor as they moved away amidst the pillars. Soon the two, man and beast, were in a closed-in place where the lights were not so bright and where the man spoke soft words into a disk that glowed suddenly into life. The face of another creature appeared as if by magic in the disk and words passed between the living one and the one pictured. It reminded the prowler of reflections of himself he had seen in quiet pools.

The words from the disk were sharply spoken. "What number did you say?"

"22X101," the living one replied, "and he hasn't any collar."

"It seems impossible. But bring him here, man, bring him to me at once. There's a thousand credit vouchers in it for you."

The man clucked his tongue with satisfaction as the face vanished from view, and the prowler thrilled with new excitement. Something of great moment was about to occur.

Then they were gliding through a narrow passage where the floor itself moved swiftly and smoothly, carrying them with it as it went. They shifted to a cage that rose speedily up through a shaft. The prowler was seized with a hollow feeling in his belly. He sat down. And then they were out in another passage which led to a door. When that door was opened to them and the

prowler saw what lay beyond it, he made a soft rumbling sound in his throat. He purred. Here indeed was the end of the trail.

Anton Rosso paid gladly, once he had examined the tiny markings punched in the prowler's ear. There could be no doubt that this was the long lost 22X101, and finding him was a stroke of good fortune such as the famous zoölogist had not encountered in many a day. He curtly dismissed the visitor from the lower levels, who stood thumbing over the sheaf of credit vouchers, and gave his attention to 22X101.

"Well, old boy," he chortled. "Fancy having you back with me! What a piece of good luck! For both of us, though you don't know it. Or maybe you do know; you seem to be glad at that."

He cupped the prowler's great head in his two hands, looking long and deep into the beast's eyes, then drew in a sharp whistling breath.

"A miracle—almost," he exulted. "And to think your line had been given up as lost! Come along boy; we start to do things now."

The prowler nuzzled the slim white hands and trotted obediently after Rosso. They entered an adjoining room where were gleaming white walls and clean smells, confusing jumbles of mechanisms, and tables with soft padded tops.

"Here, boy, jump up here," breathed Rosso, indicating one of the high tables.

There was understanding conveyed by the softly-spoken command. The prowler took the leap easily and gracefully, then lay on the pad with his chin between his forepaws. He trembled with eager anticipation, knowing instinctively that something important and desirable was to happen to him. The rhythm of his pur shortened with excitement.

Rosso grinned delightedly, then called loudly: "Strawn!"

A second white-coated man came into the room and looked at the prowler. "Man alive!" he exclaimed. "Where'd this one come from? He's a——"

"He's 22X101."

The other looked blank.

"Oh, yes, I forgot," Rosso explained. "You weren't here at that time. This fellow's the last of the 22X line; he's the one who was carried off into the wastelands by his mother almost as soon as he

was born. There's a strain in him, and qualities I've never been able to duplicate—the Woth chromosomes, you know. And transplanted glands. Even human brain cells.”

Strawn breathed hard. “He doesn’t look——”

“No, not yet. There must be an injection of the synthesized hormone 2X1. The metamorphosis will follow.”

“Metamorphosis!”

“Not physical—mental.” Rosso turned up his sleeves and went to the washbowl. “Don’t stand there staring, man. Get the vial.”

“He’s a knock-out,” persisted Strawn, his eyes never leaving the prowler. “For Lolita, perhaps?”

“Lolita, hell!” snorted Rosso. “She couldn’t raise the price. This fellow’s worth a small fortune.”

Strawn shrugged, dragged his gaze from the great yellow cat by sheer force of will, and turned to the cabinet where the mysterious liquids and powders of Rosso’s trade were stored.

The prowler, of course, had no way of knowing what it was all about. But a submerged sixth sense told him that things were as they should be, that this was his destiny, that the urges of his inner being which he had never understood were at last to reach fruition. The old life was forever behind him, he knew, and a new life was to open.

When Rosso approached the table with a glistening cylinder in his hand, the prowler shivered with ecstatic expectation. And when the hypodermic needle plunged home behind his shoulder blade he winced only slightly, looking up into the grave lean face of Rosso. Molten fire coursed suddenly through his veins and the human features above him blurred into nothingness.

This establishment and profession of Rosso’s, unique in the annals of science, had been handed down from father to son through four generations. Like his paternal ancestors before him, Rosso was an expert cytonomist, biologist, veterinarian, and a psychologist as well. His business was to supply hybrid animals of almost human intelligence as pets to the luxury-loving inhabitants of the upper levels of the cities as well as for their entertainment in exclusive closed-circle theaters and more public visionphone broadcasts.

More than a century earlier, when the centralization of United North America’s population in the eleven cities and the mechani-

zation of those cities had been complete, there had come an epidemic of wide and disastrous extent which had brought about the governmental order for the extermination of all animal pets in the union. The wastelands had long since been ravaged of all animal life save only the few packs of roaming and savage wild dogs, and so millions of children and idle women were deprived of the pets they loved.

The Rosso of that generation had seen business possibilities in the situation, and, being an experimental biologist and an animal lover of sorts had chartered a stratosphere plane and searched the jungles which yet remained in the heart of Africa and in South America for the progenitors of a new race of pets. Secretly he returned to United North America with an assorted cargo of jungle creatures, many of which were felines of one kind or another. His work with them began.

Although his first efforts were discouraging, although a number of his animals met with death in the early stages of his experimenting, he succeeded in producing several new strains by inoculation, endocrane gland manipulation, and cross breeding. Progenitors of the new lines included *Felis leo*, *Cynælurous jubata*, *Felis serval*, and *Felis concolor*.

As time went on, the original Rosso and his descendants learned more and more of the control of transmitted genes, the feeding with synthesized and natural hormones, the transplantation of entire glands and of brain and nerve cells. They produced increasingly handsome animals and succeeded in educating them to intelligence nearly approaching that of humankind. Anton Rosso, in his 22X strain had produced an almost pure line which was abruptly discontinued with the loss of the prowler. Now he could reestablish that line.

Until now, Rosso's animals of less pure strain and greatly lower intelligence had brought fancy prices from dwellers in the upper levels who desired them as pets and from the theatrical profession who used them in their acts. A creature like 22X101 was bound to have a market value greatly in excess of any that had gone before. It only remained for the injected hormones to get in their work.

When Rosso told his assistant Strawn there would be a metamorphosis he had not overstated the facts of the matter. His own father had learned much of the mental metamorphoses to be accomplished by the use of hormones following the usual cyto-

logical modifications made in the prenatal operations on embryos within the bodies of their maternal progenitors. Anton Rosso, by further study and experimentation, had improved on such methods. He had produced 22X101, a creature with possibilities hitherto undreamed of. He had delved into the mystery of physical metamorphosis in such creatures as the common frog, in which the change from tadpole to fully-developed adult frog is greatly accelerated by the feeding of ordinary thyroid extract. And he was now putting into practice the experience he had gained.

22X101 had been under the influence of the hypodermic for more than four hours. The electrodes of the psychodevelopment machine had been clamped to his massive head the greater part of that time, pouring into his subconscious, part-animal, part-human brain a mass of human knowledge, storing in the now activated cells inconceivable complexities of mathematics, literature, language, sociology. The prowler would awaken with an education.

And he would know at last the nature of those strange instincts which at times had previously puzzled him.

Lolita, famous actress of the closed-circle theater and the ether lanes, was present when consciousness returned to the yellow-furred 22X101. She gasped with delight when his eyes opened and fixed themselves on her own.

"Why, Phil," she gurgled. "His eyes are blue—like a man's. He looks as if he might speak to me."

The man at her side was Phil Strawn, Rosso's assistant. He was nervous, perturbed. They had no business in the operating room at this time.

"Yes," he agreed. "He does look that way. And maybe—Rosso is thinking of operating on his vocal cords later—maybe he will talk one of these fine days."

The prowler heard and understood. The words held distinct and definite meaning now. His heart leaped suddenly with the hope that some day he might actually speak the language that now was his own to hear and fully comprehend. He continued to stare at Lolita. In his new-born mind flamed scraps of impressed thoughts of gods and goddesses of humankind. Lolita was a goddess, his goddess. He worshiped her on the instant.

Something of his intensity of feeling must have transmitted itself to the girl, for she drew back in embarrassment. The adoration in the blue eyes of the great cat was not to be mistaken.

"But, Phil," she whispered after a moment. "He's the grandest thing, really. Look at that golden fur on him. See how the light of understanding comes into his eyes. He's marvelous."

Strawn grunted. There *was* something about this big cat that was so nearly humanlike as to send a chill chasing down his spine. The animal was *too* human—it was sacrilegious to do a thing like this, to tamper with nature's laws——

His thoughts were rudely broken off by the girl's exclamation: "He'll be mine, Phil, if I have to steal him, or steal for him. He's a miracle, that's all—a miracle. And that's what I'll name him. In my act he'll be Miracle. Come, Miracle, get up and let's see how you look on your feet."

"N-no," Strawn objected nervously. "Rosso'll——"

But the prowler had heard and obeyed. He shook his great head to rid himself of the electrodes which clung to it, then bounded from the table to the floor, stretching his stiffened joints luxuriously as he looked up at Lolita. His pur was strident, victorious. He would answer to the name she had given him. Miracle.

"Oh, he *is* beautiful," breathed Lolita. "Will he be a drawing card? Get the charts, Phil, and let's see what he knows."

"Rosso'll be here," objected Strawn.

Lolita tossed her bright head. "I'll take care of him," she asserted. "Get the charts."

Strawn set up two white boards, one covered with black numbers and the commoner mathematical symbols, the other with printed words.

"Look, Miracle," said the girl eagerly. "Do you understand?"

The prowler made a helpless noise in his throat. If only he might have that gift of speech Strawn had hinted at.

"Nod your head—so—if you understand." Lolita illustrated the ordinary gesture of assent.

The great yellow cat nodded solemnly.

"What—what is the cube root of twenty-seven?" Strawn asked him falteringly.

"Point to the number," the girl put in.

Miracle walked to the chart and extended a forepaw. It was too

large and clumsy; it covered a dozen of the numbers. Delicately he unsheathed a sharp curving claw and scratched at the number three.

"He *is* a miracle," admitted the man.

"What is my name?" inquired Lolita.

The metamorphosed prowler spelled it out by indicating letters on the second chart. Then he searched for words on the same chart and found them. "I am hungry," he pointed out swiftly.

"Good Lord!" choked Strawn. "He's human—it's ghastly."

"It's wonderful," the young actress corrected him. Her black eyes flashed with excitement. "Get him something to eat, Phil." She knelt on the metal floor and cuddled Miracle's great head in her arms.

Each heartbeat was an ache in his massive chest. The hunger of the soul was more agonizing than that of the stomach.

And then, before Strawn had gone for the food, Rosso was in the room bellowing. The prowler's back arched stiffly and he planted himself in front of the girl, hissing a warning.

Lolita's silvery laugh relieved the ensuing tension.

"I wouldn't sell him for a million," Rosso told her later. "Not for two million. He's invaluable to me right now; I must perpetuate his line. After that is assured—why, some upper-level dowager will be glad to meet my price. You can't buy him, Lolita."

"I *must* have him." Tears stood in the girl's eyes.

Miracle had eaten largely and with satisfaction of his first synthetic food and now lay at Lolita's feet. Rosso regarded the great cat through narrowed eyes.

"Seems to have taken to you plenty," he said slowly.

"And I to him. Can't you see—my act with him will be a hit they'll never get over? A natural! We can make your price for you in time."

"Impossible." Rosso rose from his chair and paced the floor.

Miracle could see that he was undecided. He got up and walked behind him, rubbing against his legs, endeavoring to add his own pleadings to those of Lolita.

"I'll be damned!" said Rosso, sitting down again. "Tell you what I'll do. You insure him for two million, promise to leave him with me on week-ends, and split the profits of your act with me and I'll let you have him for a year. After that we'll see."

Strawn, joining them, scowled darkly at Lolita's demonstrations. In her joy and excitement she had flung herself on Rosso's

knees and hugged him enthusiastically. Miracle suspected that Strawn loved the girl and was jealous. He succeeded in making an odd chuckling sound in his throat, which caused Strawn to peer at him sharply.

There were lawyers and signed contracts then, after which Miracle went away with Lolita.

A long and, to Miracle, deliriously happy training period followed. He learned to walk on his hind legs and to wear the habiliments of man. Acrobatics of the most intricate sort came next, then an astonishingly graceful dance number he performed with Lolita. A huge instrument was built for him, an instrument similar to a typewriter, but which projected letters two feet high on a screen when he depressed the keys. By its use he was able to converse intelligently and to answer before an audience questions which might be propounded to him.

A famous surgeon performed a preliminary operation in his throat which made him sick for three days. It would be months before the second operation could take place, probably more than a year before he could be made to speak in humanlike voice. But the thought of it was fascinating and ever recurrent in his mind.

He was with Lolita constantly. Their appearance together in public streets or in the squares was always a signal for a near riot, so they stayed for the most part in her upper-level apartments when not in the hall of rehearsals. Here the girl would read to him by the hour as he curled contentedly at her feet.

At last came their first public performance. It was before the scanning apparatus and microphones of the visionphone broadcasters and it took United North America by storm. Overnight, Lolita and Miracle became the most talked-of attraction to the jaded pleasure-loving citizenry. They were in immediate demand for the closed-circle theaters where only private performances were given. And it was in these that Miracle found his greatest enjoyment; here he was in the closest contact with mankind, and here Lolita's fondness for him was most manifest.

It was in a closed-circle theater, too, that the event occurred which brought this entire new world of his tumbling about his ears. A fat, bejeweled woman in the front row of seats came hurriedly to the stage immediately after the performance, before the applause had yet subsided.

"Miss Lolita," she puffed. "I want to buy Miracle. I am the wife of the governor of Chicago and can pay any price demanded."

Lolita was a tiny thing of graceful curves and stood but shoulder high to Miracle, who was erect at her side. Her weight was thirty pounds less than his own. But the vigor with which she hugged him left him momentarily breathless.

"He is not for sale," she said stoutly.

But the fat dowager was not to be put off. "I've heard," she said coolly, "that you have only leased Miracle from Rosso. I shall go to see him about this."

Then she swept majestically from the stage and Lolita was crying against the satin lapels of the coat which covered Miracle's breast. The curtain dropped before them.

Rosso called on Lolita the following day. "I've an offer of three million for Miracle," he told her bluntly.

"You can't have him, not until my year is up at any rate. Don't forget I have a contract."

Rosso smiled in a superior manner. "Read it," he said. "You'll find a clause which permits me to cancel the agreement in the event of an offer of more than two million for him."

Lolita's smooth shoulders drooped. She recalled having read the clause but not considering it seriously at the time. The figures had seemed too fantastic.

"But, Rosso," she begged, "your split on the act is running three thousand a week already. It'll be more. Please let me keep him."

"I need immediate credit. Shall I take him with me or must I use force?"

The young actress was on the floor then with her white arms encircling Miracle's head. "You'll have to sue," she said defiantly. "And don't try any rough stuff either. Miracle would tear you apart."

In substantiation of her words, the erstwhile prowler rose up stiff-legged, raising Lolita to her feet with his quick movement. Rosso backed away in alarm.

"You win," he sputtered. "But not for long, Lolita. In less than twenty-four hours I'll have a court order for his surrender, and I'll bring the sheriff here. The robot police, too."

He slammed the door as he went out.

"We'll run away," the girl cried into the thick yellow fur back of Miracle's left ear. "To-night. I'll get out my private air cab and

we'll go to South America. I'm a citizen there anyway and he'll not be able to extradite us."

Miracle trembled with the intensity of his emotion. He nuzzled the bright head that lay against his own and wished more than ever for the gift of speech.

They spent most of the remaining hours before dinner romping in the gymnasium, Lolita saying she was too nervous and upset to read. Miracle was more than content. The slim flashing figure in silken tights had never been more an object of adoration than it was to-day.

When darkness came, they were on the rooftops of the throbbing city. No one saw them when they took off in Lolita's air cab, or at least no one of whom they were aware. But not more than hour of their southwestward flight had been covered when Lolita's visionphone shrilled its call. They were being followed.

"Shall I answer?" quavered the girl.

Miracle nodded, with a sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach.

It was Phil Strawn whose image flashed into view. The man's face was pinched with anxiety. "Lolita," he husked. "I've left Rosso and want to be with you. Will you have me?"

Miracle observed the flush that covered the girl's cheeks, and the trembling of her fingers on the controls.

"We're over the wastelands," she objected.

"I'm right behind you in my own cab," came the answer. "Just you land down there and I'll follow to pick you up."

Miracle made no move as the little ship nosed down toward the wilds that now were so alien to him. He made no move when the door of the cab opened a little later and Strawn stepped in to take the seat beside Lolita. He did not move until the man had enfolded her willing form in his arms.

Then the prowler slipped stealthily out through the door and into the night. He knew in one devastating instant that his adoration of his goddess was depriving her of the luxurious life she had enjoyed; that her fondness for him was taking her away from her friends. An impossible situation. He was, after all, only the prowler of the wastelands. To the wastelands he must return.

The habitations of man were not for him. His instincts and

desires and qualities would only get him into trouble there. And the gift of speech which he had so greatly desired would only make his own life in man's domain one of deeper dissatisfaction. He was an anachronism, a creature apart from all others. So be it, then.

He padded off through the darkness and did not once look back until he had put a safe distance between himself and the two tiny ships of the air. When he did risk a backward glance he dimly saw the cabs where he had left them. He visioned Lolita in Strawn's embrace and for a moment ached with the human emotion of jealousy. Then a better quality with which he had been artificially endowed came to his rescue. A sense of satisfaction stole over him as confidence came that Lolita would now be happy. In Strawn's love she'd soon forget her sympathetic fondness for a yellow cat.

The prowler raised his eyes to the heavens where the streaking lights of stratosphere planes high in the upper lanes mingled with the brilliant flickering points of the stars. The distant baying of a pack of wild dogs brought him to his feet and sent him loping off into the far reaches of the wastelands.

Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875-1950) was one of the great story-tellers of our century. The stories of Tarzan have been translated into over 50 languages. Burroughs' novels of John Carter of Mars appear to have become a permanent part of the literary scene. In acknowledgement of this, Oxford University recently issued a study version of the first of the series, *A Princess of Mars*, which was also the first story that Edgar Rice Burroughs ever had published. Before his death, Burroughs had begun a new series to take place on the planet Jupiter with John Carter as the hero. The first story in that series, "Skeleton Men of Jupiter," by its appearance here becomes the first story by Edgar Rice Burroughs ever to have been included in any anthology.

Skeleton Men of Jupiter

BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Chapter I

I am no scientist. I am a fighting man. My most beloved weapon is the sword, and during a long life I have seen no reason to alter my theories as to its proper application to the many problems with which I have been faced. This is not true of the scientists. They are constantly abandoning one theory for another one. The law of gravitation is about the only theory that has held throughout my lifetime—and if the earth should suddenly start rotating seventeen times faster than it now does, even the law of gravitation would fail us and we would all go sailing off into space.

Theories come and theories go—scientific theories. I recall that there was once a theory that Time and Space moved forward constantly in a straight line. There was also a theory that neither Time nor Space existed—it was all in your mind's eye. Then came the theory that Time and Space curved in upon themselves. Tomorrow, some scientist may show us reams and reams of paper and hundreds of square feet of blackboard covered with equations, formulae, signs, symbols, and diagrams to prove that Time

and Space curve out away from themselves. Then our theoretic universe will come tumbling about our ears, and we shall have to start all over again from scratch.

Like many fighting men, I am inclined to be credulous concerning matters outside my vocation; or at least I used to be. I believed whatever the scientists said. Long ago, I believed with Flammarion that Mars was habitable and inhabited; then a newer and more reputable school of scientists convinced me that it was neither. Without losing hope, I was yet forced to believe them until I came to Mars to live. They still insist that Mars is neither habitable nor inhabited, but I live here. Fact and theory seem to be opposed. Unquestionably, the scientists appear to be correct in theory. Equally incontrovertible is it that I am correct in fact.

In the adventure that I am about to narrate, fact and theory will again cross swords. I hate to do this to my long-suffering scientific friends; but if they would only consult me first rather than dogmatically postulating theories which do not meet with popular acclaim, they would save themselves much embarrassment.

Dejah Thoris, my incomparable princess, and I were sitting upon a carved ersite bench in one of the gardens of our palace in Lesser Helium when an officer in the leather of Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Helium, approached and saluted.

"From Tardos Mors to John Carter, kaor!" he said. "The jeddak requests your immediate presence in the Hall of Jeddaks in the imperial palace in Greater Helium."

"At once," I replied.

"May I fly you over, sir?" he asked. "I came in a two seater."

"Thanks," I replied. "I'll join you at the hangar in a moment." He saluted and left us.

"Who was he?" asked Dejah Thoris. "I don't recall ever having seen him before."

"Probably one of the new officers from Zor, whom Tardos Mors has commissioned in the Jeddak's Guard. It was a gesture of his, made to assure Zor that he has the utmost confidence in the loyalty of that city and as a measure for healing old wounds."

Zor, which lies about three hundred eighty miles southeast of

Helium, is one of the more recent conquests of Helium and had given us a great deal of trouble in the past because of treasonable acts instigated by a branch of its royal family led by one Multis Par, a prince. About five years before the events I am about to narrate occurred, this Multis Par had disappeared; and since then Zor had given us no trouble. No one knew what had become of the man, and it was supposed that he had either taken the last, long voyage down the river Iss to the Lost Sea of Korus in the Valley Dor or had been captured and murdered by members of some horde of savage Green men. Nor did anyone appear to care—just so he never returned to Zor, where he was thoroughly hated for his arrogance and cruelty.

"I hope that my revered grandfather does not keep you long," said Dejah Thoris. "We are having a few guests for dinner tonight, and I do not wish you to be late."

"A few!" I said. "How many? two hundred or three hundred?"

"Don't be impossible," she said, laughing. "Really, only a few."

"A thousand, if it pleases you, my dear," I assured her as I kissed her. "And now, good-by! I'll doubtless be back within the hour." That was a year ago!

As I ran up the ramp toward the hangar on the palace roof, I had, for some then unaccountable reason, a sense of impending ill; but I attributed it to the fact that my tete-a-tete with my princess had been interrupted.

The thin air of dying Mars renders the transition from day to night startlingly sudden to an earthman. Twilight is of short duration owing to the negligible refraction of the sun's rays. When I had left Dejah Thoris, the sun, though low, was still shining; the garden was in shadow, but it was still daylight. When I stepped from the head of the ramp to that part of the roof of the palace where the hangar was located which housed the private fliers of the family, dim twilight partially obscured my vision. It would soon be dark. I wondered why the hangar guard had not switched on the lights.

In the very instant that I realized that something was amiss, a score of men surrounded and overpowered me before I could draw and defend myself. A voice cautioned me to silence. It was the voice of the man who had summoned me into this trap. When the others spoke, it was in a language I had never heard before.

They spoke in dismal, hollow monotone—expressionless, sepulchral.

They had thrown me face down upon the pavement and trussed my wrists behind my back. Then they jerked me roughly to my feet. Now, for the first time, I obtained a fairly good sight of my captors. I was appalled. I could not believe my own eyes. These things were not men. They were human skeletons! Black eye sockets looked out from grinning skulls. Bony, skeletal fingers grasped my arms. It seemed to me that I could see every bone in each body. Yet the things were alive! They moved. They spoke. They dragged me toward a strange craft that I had not before noticed. It lay in the shadow of the hangar—long, lean, sinister. It looked like an enormous projectile, with rounded nose and tapering tail.

In the first brief glance I had of it, I saw fins forward below its median line, a long, longitudinal aileron (or so I judged it to be) running almost the full length of the ship, and strangely designed elevator and rudder as part of the empennage assembly. I saw no propellers; but then I had little time for a close examination of the strange craft, as I was quickly hustled through a doorway in its metal side.

The interior was pitch dark. I could see nothing other than the faint light of the dying day visible through long, narrow portholes in the ship's side.

The man who had betrayed me followed me into the ship with my captors. The door was closed and securely fastened; then the ship rose silently into the night. No light showed upon it, within or without. However, I was certain that one of our patrol ships must see it; then, if nothing more, my people would have a clew upon which to account for my disappearance; and before dawn a thousand ships of the navy of Helium would be scouring the surface of Barsoom and the air above it in search of me, nor could any ship the size of this find hiding place wherein to elude them.

Once above the city, the lights of which I could see below us, the craft shot away at appalling speed. Nothing upon Barsoom could have hoped to overhaul it. It moved at great speed and in utter silence. The cabin lights were switched on. I was disarmed and my hands were freed. I looked with revulsion, almost with

horror, upon the twenty or thirty creatures which surrounded me.

I saw now that they were not skeletons, though they still closely resembled the naked bones of dead men. Parchmentlike skin was stretched tightly over the bony structure of the skull. There seemed to be neither cartilage nor fat underlying it. What I had thought were hollow eye sockets were deep set brown eyes showing no whites. The skin of the face merged with what should have been gums at the roots of the teeth, which were fully exposed in both jaws, precisely as are the teeth of a naked skull. The nose was but a gaping hole in the center of the face. There were no external ears—only the orifices—nor was there any hair upon any of the exposed parts of their bodies nor upon their heads. The things were even more hideous than the hideous kaldanes of Bantoom—those horrifying spider men into whose toils fell Tara of Helium during that adventure which led her to the country of The Chessmen of Mars; they, at least, had beautiful bodies, even though they were not their own.

The bodies of my captors harmonized perfectly with their heads—parchment-like skin covered the bones of their limbs so tightly that it was difficult to convince one's self that it was not true bone that was exposed. And so tightly was this skin drawn over their torsos that every rib and every vertebra stood out in plain and disgusting relief. When they stood directly in front of a bright light, I could see their internal organs.

They wore no clothing other than a G string. Their harness was quite similar to that which we Barsoomians wear, which is not at all remarkable, since it was designed to serve the same purpose—supporting a sword, a dagger, and a pocket pouch.

Disgusted, I turned away from them to look down upon the moon bathed surface of my beloved Mars. But where was it! Close to port was Cluros, the farther moon! I caught a glimpse of its surface as we flashed by. Fourteen thousand five hundred miles in a little more than a minute! It was incredible.

The red man who had engineered my capture came and sat down beside me. His rather handsome face was sad. "I am sorry, John Carter," he said. "Perhaps, if you will permit me to explain, you will at least understand why I did it. I do not expect that you will ever forgive me."

"Where is this ship taking me?" I demanded.

"To Sasoom," he said.

Sasoom! That is the Barsoomian name for Jupiter—three hundred and forty-two million miles from the palace where my Dejah Thoris awaited me!

Chapter II

For some time I sat in silence, gazing out into the inky black void of space, a Stygian backdrop against which stars and planets shone with intense brilliancy, steady and untwinkling. To port or starboard, above, below, the heavens stared at me with unblinking eyes—millions of white hot, penetrating eyes. Many questions harassed my mind. Had I been especially signalled out for capture? If so, why? How had this large ship been able to enter Helium and settle upon my landing stage in broad daylight? Who was this sad faced, apologetic man who had led me into such a trap? He could have nothing against me personally. Never, before had he stepped into my garden, had I seen him.

It was he who broke the silence. It was as though he had read my thoughts. "You wonder why you are here, John Carter," he said. "If you will bear with me, I shall tell you. In the first place, let me introduce myself. I am U Dan, formerly a padwar in the guard of Zu Tith, the jed of Zor who was killed in battle when Helium overthrew his tyrannical reign and annexed the city.

"My sympathies were all upon the side of Helium, and I saw a brilliant and happy future for my beloved city once she was a part of the great Heliumetic empire. I fought against Helium; because it was my sworn duty to defend the jed I loathed—a monster of tyranny and cruelty—but when the war was over, I gladly swore allegiance to Tardos Mors, jeddak of Helium.

"I had been raised in the palace of the jed in utmost intimacy with the members of the royal family. I knew them all well, especially Multis Par, the prince, who, in the natural course of events, would have succeeded to the throne. He was of a kind with his father, Zu Tith—arrogant, cruel, tyrannical by nature. After the fall of Zor, he sought to foment discord and arouse the people to revolt. When he failed, he disappeared. That was about five years ago.

"Another member of the royal family whom I knew well was as unlike Zu Tith and Multis Par as day is unlike night. Her name is

Vaja. She is a cousin of Multis Par. I loved her and she loved me. We were to have been married, when, about two years after the disappearance of Multis Par, Vaja mysteriously disappeared."

I did not understand why he was telling me all this. I was certainly not interested in his love affair. I was not interested in him. I was still less interested, if possible, in Multis Par; but I listened.

"I searched," he continued. "The governor of Zor gave me every assistance within his power, but all to no avail. Then, one night, Multis Par entered my quarters when I was alone. He wasted no time. He came directly to the point.

"I suppose," he said, 'that you are wondering what has become of Vaja.'

"I knew then that he had been instrumental in her abduction; and I feared the worst, for I knew the type of man he was. I whipped out my sword. 'Where is she?' I demanded. 'Tell me, if you care to live.'

"He only laughed at me. 'Don't be a fool,' he said. 'If you kill me you will never see her again. You will never even know where she is. Work with me, and you may have her back. But you will have to work fast, as I am becoming very fond of her. It is odd,' he added reminiscently, 'that I could have lived for years in the same palace with her and have been blind to her many charms, both mental and physical—especially physical.'

"Where is she?" I demanded. 'If you have harmed her, you beast—'

"Don't call names, U Dan," he said. 'If you annoy me too greatly I may keep her for myself and enlist the services of some one other than you to assist me with the plan I had come to explain to you. I thought you would be more sensible. You used to be a very sensible man; but then, of course, love plays strange tricks upon one's mental processes. I am commencing to find that out in my own case.' He gave a nasty little laugh. 'But don't worry,' he continued. 'She is quite safe—so far. How much longer she will be safe depends wholly upon you.'

"Where is she?" I demanded.

"Where you can never get her without my help," he replied.

"If she is anywhere upon all Barsoom, I shall find her," I said.

"She is not on Barsoom. She is on Sasoom."

"You lie, Multis Par," I said.

"He shrugged, indifferently. 'Perhaps you will believe her,' he said, and handed me a letter. It was indeed from Vaja. I recall its message word for word:

"'Incredible as it may seem to you, I am a prisoner on Sasoom. Multis Par has promised to bring you here to me if you will perform what he calls a small favor for him. I do not know what he is going to ask of you; but unless it can be honorably done, do not do it. I am safe and unharmed.'

"What is it you wish me to do?" I asked.

"I shall not attempt to quote his exact words; but this, in effect, is what he told me: Multis Par's disappearance from Zor was caused by his capture by men from Sasoom. For some time they had been coming to this planet, reconnoitering, having in mind the eventual conquest of Barsoom.

"I asked him for what reason, and he explained that it was simply because they were a warlike race. Their every thought was of war, as it had been for ages until the warlike spirit was as compelling as the urge for self-preservation. They had conquered all other peoples upon Sasoom and sought a new world to conquer.

"They had captured him to learn what they could of the armaments and military effectiveness of various Barsoomian nations, and had decided that as Helium was the most powerful, it would be Helium upon which they would descend. Helium once disposed of, the rest of Barsoom would, they assumed, be easy to conquer."

"And where do I come in in this scheme of theirs?" I asked.

"I am coming to that," said U Dan. "The Morgors are a thorough-going and efficient people. They neglect no little detail which might effect the success or failure of a campaign. They already have excellent maps of Barsoom and considerable data relative to the fleets and armament of the principal nations. They now wish to check this data and obtain full information as to the war technique of the Heliumites. This they expect to get from you. This they will get from you."

I smiled. "Neither they nor you rate the honor and loyalty of a Heliumite very highly."

A sad smile crossed his lips. "I know how you feel," he said. "I felt the same way—until they captured Vaja and her life became

the price of my acquiescence. Only to save her did I agree to act as a decoy to aid in your capture. The Morgors are adepts in individual and mass psychology as well as in the art of war."

"These things are Morgors?" I asked, nodding in the direction of some of the repulsive creatures. U Dan nodded. "I can appreciate the position in which you have been placed," I said, "but the Morgors have no such hold on me."

"Wait," said U Dan.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Just wait. They will find a way. They are fiends. No one could have convinced me before Multis Par came to me with his proposition that I could have been forced to betray a man whom I, with all decent men, admire as I have admired you, John Carter. Perhaps I was wrong, but when I learned that Vaja would be tortured and mutilated after Multis Par had had his way with her and even then not be allowed to die but kept for future torture, I weakened and gave in. I do not expect you to forgive, but I hope that you will understand."

"I do understand," I said. "Perhaps, under like circumstances, I should have done the same thing." I could see how terribly the man's conscience tortured him. I could see that he was essentially a man of honor. I could forgive him for the thing that he had done for an innocent creature whom he loved, but could he expect me to betray my country, betray my whole world, to save a woman I had never seen. Still, I was bothered. Frankly, I did not know what I should do when faced with the final decision. "At least," I said, "should I ever be situated as you were, I could appear to comply while secretly working to defeat their ends."

"It was thus that I thought," he said. "It is still the final shred by which I cling to my self-respect. Perhaps, before it is too late, I may still be able to save both Vaja and yourself."

"Perhaps we can work together to that end and to the salvation of Helium," I said; "though I am really not greatly worried about Helium. I think she can take care of herself."

He shook his head. "Not if a part, even, of what Multis Par has told me is true. They will come in thousands of these ships, invisible to the inhabitants of Barsoom. Perhaps two million of them will invade Helium and overrun her two principal cities before a single inhabitant is aware that a single enemy threatens their security. They will come with lethal weapons of which Bar-

soomians know nothing and which they cannot, therefore, combat."

"Invisible ships!" I exclaimed. "Why, I saw this one plainly after I was captured."

"Yes," he said. "It was not invisible then, but it was invisible when it came in broad daylight under the bows of your patrol ships and landed in one of the most prominent places in all Lesser Helium. It was not invisible when you first saw it; because it had cast off its invisibility, or, rather, the Morgors had cast it off so that they might find it again themselves, for otherwise it would have been as invisible to them as to us."

"Do you know how they achieve this invisibility?" I asked.

"Multis Par has explained it to me," replied U Dan. "Let me see; I am not much of a scientist, but I think that I recall more or less correctly what he told me. It seems that on some of the ocean beaches on Sasoom there is a submicroscopic, magnetic sand composed of prismatic crystals. When the Morgors desire invisibility for a ship, they magnetize the hull; and then, from countless tiny apertures in the hull, they coat the whole exterior of the ship with these prismatic crystals. They simply spray them out, and they settle in a cloud upon the hull, causing light rays to bend around the ship. The instant that the hull is demagnetized, these tiny particles, light as air, fall or are blown off; and instantly the ship is visible again."

Here, a Morgor approached and interrupted our conversation. His manner was arrogant and rude. I could not understand his words, as he spoke his own language in the hollow, graveyard tones I had previously noticed. U Dan replied in the same language but in a less lugubrious tone of voice; then he turned to me.

"Your education is to commence at once," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"During this voyage you are to learn the language of the Morgors," he explained.

"How long is the voyage going to last?" I asked. "It takes about three months to learn a language well enough to understand and make yourself understood."

"The voyage will take about eighteen days, as we shall have to make a detour of some million miles to avoid the Asteroids. They happen to lie directly in our way."

"I am supposed to learn their language in eighteen days?" I asked.

"You are not only supposed to, but you will," replied U Dan.

Chapter III

My education commenced. It was inconceivably brutal, but most effective. My instructors worked on me in relays, scarcely giving me time to eat or sleep. U Dan assisted as interpreter, which was immensely helpful to me, as was the fact that I am exceedingly quick in picking up new languages. Sometimes I was so overcome by lack of sleep that my brain lagged and my responses were slow and inaccurate. Upon one such occasion, the Morgor who was instructing me slapped my face. I had put up with everything else; because I was so very anxious to learn their language—a vital necessity if I were ever to hope to cope with them and thwart their fantastic plan of conquest. But I could not put up with that. I hit the fellow a single blow that sent him entirely across the cabin, but I almost broke my hand against his unpadded, bony jaw.

He did not get up. He lay where he had fallen. Several of his fellows came for me with drawn swords. The situation looked bad, as I was unarmed. U Dan was appalled. Fortunately for me, the officer in command of the ship had been attracted by the commotion and appeared at the scene of action in time to call his men off. He demanded an explanation.

I had now mastered sufficient words of their language so that I could understand almost everything that was said to me and make myself understood by them, after a fashion. I told the fellow that I had been starved and deprived of sleep and had not complained, but that no man could strike me without suffering the consequences.

"And no creature of a lower order may strike a Morgor without suffering the consequences," he replied.

"What are you going to do about it?" I asked.

"I am going to do nothing about it," he replied. "My orders require me to bring you alive to Eurobus. When I have done that and reported your behavior, it will lie wholly within the discretion of Bandalion as to what your punishment shall be"; then he

walked away, but food was brought me and I was allowed to sleep; nor did another Morgor strike me during the remainder of the voyage.

While I was eating, I asked U Dan what Eurobus was. "It is their name for the planet Sasoom," he replied.

"And who is Bandolian?"

"Well, I suppose he would be called a jeddak on Barsoom. I judge this from the numerous references I have heard them make concerning him. Anyhow, he seems to be an object of fear if not veneration."

After a long sleep, I was much refreshed. Everything that I had been taught was clear again in my mind, no longer dulled by exhaustion. It was then that the commander took it upon himself to examine me personally. I am quite sure that he did so for the sole purpose of finding fault with me and perhaps punishing me. He was extremely nasty and arrogant. His simplest questions were at first couched in sarcastic language; but finally, evidently disappointed, he left me. I was given no more instruction.

"You have done well," said U Dan. "You have, in a very short time, mastered their language well enough to suit them."

This was the fifteenth day. During the last three days they left me alone. Travelling through space is stupefyingly monotonous. I had scarcely glanced from the portholes for days. This was, however, principally because my time was constantly devoted to instruction; but now, with nothing else to do, I glanced out. A most gorgeous scene presented itself to my astonished eyes. Gorgeous Jupiter loomed before me in all his majestic immensity. Five of his moons were plainly visible in the heavens. I could even see the tiny one closest to him, which is only thirty miles in diameter. During the ensuing two days, I saw, or at least I thought I saw, all of the remaining five moons. And Jupiter grew larger and more imposing. We were approaching him at the very considerable speed of twenty-three miles per second, but were still some two million miles distant.

Freed from the monotony of language lessons, my mind was once more enslaved to my curiosity. How could life exist upon a planet which one school of scientific thoughts claimed to have a surface temperature of two hundred and sixty degrees below zero

and which another school was equally positive was still in half molten condition and so hot that gases rose as hot vapor into its thick, warm atmosphere to fall as incessant rain? How could human life exist in an atmosphere made up largely of ammonia and methane gases? And what of the effect of the planet's terrific gravitational pull? Would my legs be able to support my weight? If I fell down, would I be able to rise again?

Another question, which presented itself to my mind, related to the motive power which had been carrying us through space at terrific speed for seventeen days. I asked U Dan if he knew.

"They utilize the Eighth Barsoomian Ray, what we know as the ray of propulsion, in combination with the highly concentrated gravitational forces of all celestial bodies within the range of whose attraction the ship passes, and a concentration of Ray L (cosmic rays) which are collected from space and discharged at high velocities from propulsion tubes at the ship's stern. The Eighth Barsoomian Ray helps to give the ship initial velocity upon leaving a planet and as a brake to its terrific speed when approaching its landing upon another. Gravitational forces are utilized both to accelerate speed and to guide the ship. The secret of their success with these inter-planetary ships lies in the ingenious methods they have developed for concentrating these various forces and directing their tremendous energies."

"Thanks, U Dan," I said, "I think I grasp the general idea. It would certainly surprise some of my scientific friends on earth."

My passing reference to scientists started me to thinking of the vast accumulation of theories I was about to see shattered when I landed on Jupiter within the next twenty-four hours. It certainly must be habitable for a race quite similar to our own. These people had lungs, a heart, kidneys, a liver, and other internal organs similar to our own. I knew this for a fact, as I could see them every time one of the Morgors stood between me and a bright light, so thin and transparent was the parchmentlike skin that stretched tightly over their frames. Once more the scientists would be wrong. I felt sorry for them. They have been wrong so many times and had to eat humble pie. There were those scientists, for instance, who clung to the Ptolemaic System of the universe; and who, after Galileo had discovered four of the moons of Jupiter in 1610, argued that such pretended discoveries were absurd, their argument being that since we have seven

openings in the head—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and a mouth, there could be in the heavens but seven planets. Having dismissed Galileo's absurd pretensions in this scientific manner, they caused him to be thrown into jail.

When at a distance of about five hundred thousand miles from Jupiter, the ship began to slow down very gradually in preparation for a landing; and some three or four hours later we entered the thick cloud envelope which surrounds the planet. We were barely crawling along now at not more than six hundred miles an hour.

I was all eagerness to see the surface of Jupiter; and extremely impatient of the time that it took the ship to traverse the envelope, in which we could see absolutely nothing.

At last we broke through, and what a sight was revealed to my astonished eyes! A great world lay below me, illuminated by a weird red light which seemed to emanate from the inner surface of the cloud envelope, shedding a rosy glow over mountain, hill, dale, plain, and ocean. At first I could in no way account for this all pervading illumination; but presently, my eyes roving over the magnificent panorama lying below me, I saw in the distance an enormous volcano, from which giant flames billowed upward thousands of feet into the air. As I was to learn later, the crater of this giant was a full hundred miles in diameter and along the planet's equator there stretched a chain of these Gargantuan torches for some thirty thousand miles, while others were dotted over the entire surface of the globe, giving both light and heat to a world that would have been dark and cold without them.

As we dropped lower, I saw what appeared to be cities, all located at a respectful distance from these craters. In the air, I saw several ships similar to that which had brought me from Mars. Some were very small; others were much larger than the one with which I had become so familiar. Two small ships approached us, and we slowed down almost to a stop. They were evidently patrol ships. From several ports guns were trained on us. One of the ships lay at a little distance; the other came alongside. Our commander raised a hatch in the upper surface of the ship above the control room and stuck his head out. A door in the side of the patrol ship opened, and an officer appeared. The two

exchanged a few words; then the commander of the patrol ship saluted and closed the door in which he had appeared. We were free to proceed. All this had taken place at an altitude of some five thousand feet.

We now spiraled down slowly toward a large city. Later, I learned that it covered an area of about four hundred square miles. It was entirely walled, and the walls and buildings were of a uniform dark brown color, as were the pavements of the avenues. It was a dismal, repellent city built entirely of volcanic rock. Within its boundaries I could see no sign of vegetation—not a patch of sward, not a shrub, not a tree; no color to relieve the monotony of somber brown.

The city was perfectly rectangular, having a long axis of about twenty-five miles and a width of about sixteen. The avenues were perfectly straight and equidistant, one from the other, cutting the city into innumerable, identical square blocks. The buildings were all perfect rectangles, though not all of either the same size or height—the only break in the depressing monotony of this gloomy city.

Well, not the only break: there were open spaces where there were no buildings—perhaps plazas or parade grounds. But these I did not notice until we had dropped quite low above the city, as they were all paved with the same dark brown rock. The city was quite as depressing in appearance as is Salt Lake City from the air on an overcast February day. The only relief from this insistent sense of gloom was the rosy light which pervaded the scene, the reflection of the flames of the great volcanoes from the inner surface of the cloud envelope; this and the riotous growth of tropical verdure beyond the city's walls—weird, unearthly growths of weird, unearthly hues.

Accompanied by the two patrol ships, we now dropped gently into a large open space near the center of the city, coming to rest close to a row of hangars in which were many craft similar to our own.

We were immediately surrounded by a detail of warriors; and, much to my surprise, I saw a number of human beings much like myself in appearance, except that their skins were purple. These were unarmed and quite naked except for G strings, having no

harness such as is worn by the Morgors. As soon as we had disembarked, these people ran the ship into the hangar. They were slaves.

There were no interchanges of greetings between the returning Morgors and those who had come out to meet the ship. The two commanding officers saluted one another and exchanged a few routine military brevities. The commander of our ship gave his name, which was Haglion, the name of his ship, and stated that he was returning from Mars—he called it Garobus. Then he detailed ten of his own men to accompany him as guards for U Dan and me. They surrounded us, and we walked from the landing field in the wake of Haglion.

He led us along a broad avenue filled with pedestrian and other traffic. On the sidewalks there were only Morgors. The purple people walked in the gutters. Many Morgors were mounted on enormous, repulsive looking creatures with an infinite number of legs. They reminded me of huge centipedes, their bodies being jointed similarly, each joint being about eighteen inches long. Their heads were equipped with many long sharp teeth. Like nearly all the land animals of Jupiter, as I was to learn later, they were ungulate, hoofs evidently being rendered necessary by the considerable areas of hardened lava on the surface of the planet, as well as by the bits of lava rock in the soil.

These creatures were sometimes of great length, seating as high as ten or twelve Morgors on their backs. There were other beasts of burden on the avenue. They were of strange, unearthly forms; but I shall not bore you by describing them here.

Above this traffic moved small fliers in both directions. Thus the avenue accommodated a multitude of people, strange, dour people who seldom spoke and, as far as I had seen, never laughed. They might have, as indeed they looked, risen from sad graves to rattle their bones in mock life in a cemetery city of the dead.

U Dan and I walked in the gutter, a guard on the sidewalk close beside each of us. We were not good enough to walk where the Morgors walked! Haglion led us to a large plaza surrounded by buildings of considerable size, but of no beauty. A few of them boasted towers—some squat, some tall, all ugly. They looked as though they had been built to endure throughout the ages.

We were conducted to one of these buildings, before the en-

trance to which a single sentry stood. Haglion spoke to him, and he summoned an officer from the interior of the building, after which we all entered. Our names and a description of each of us were entered in a large book. Haglion was given a receipt for us, after which he and our original escort left.

Our new custodian issued instructions to several warriors who were in the room, and they hustled U Dan and me down a spiral stairway to a dim basement, where we were thrown into a gloomy cell. Our escort locked the door on us and departed.

Chapter IV

Although I had often wondered about Jupiter, I had never hoped nor cared to visit it because of the inhospitable conditions which earthly scientists assure us pertain to this great planet. However, here I was, and conditions were not at all as the scientists had described. Unquestionably, the mass of Jupiter is far greater than that of earth or Mars, yet I felt the gravitational pull far less than I had upon earth. It was even less than that which I had experienced upon Mars. This was due, I realized, to the rapid revolution of the planet upon its axis. Centrifugal force tending to throw us off into space, more than outweighed the increased force of gravitation. I had never before felt so light upon my feet. I was intrigued by contemplation of the height and distances to which I might jump.

The cell in which I found myself, while large, precluded any experiments along that line. It was a large room of hard, brown lava rock. A few white lights set in recesses in the ceiling gave meager illumination. From the center of one wall a little stream of water tinkled into a small cavity in the floor, the overflow being carried off by a gutter through a small hole in the end wall of the cell. There were some grass mats on the floor. These constituted the sole furnishings of the bleak prison.

"The Morgors are thoughtful hosts," I remarked to U Dan. "They furnish water for drinking and bathing. They have installed sewage facilities. They have given us whereon to lie or sit. Our cell is lighted. It is strong. We are secure against the attacks of our enemies. However, as far as the Morgors are concerned, I—"

"S-s-sh!" cautioned U Dan. "We are not alone." He nodded

toward the far end of the cell. I looked, and for the first time perceived what appeared to be the figure of a man upon a mat.

Simultaneously, it arose and came toward us. It was, indeed, a man. "You need have no fear of me," he said. "Say what you please of the Morgors. You could not possibly conceive any terms of opprobrium in which to describe them more virulent than those which I have long used and considered inadequate."

Except that the man's skin was a light blue, I could not see that he differed materially in physical appearance from U Dan and myself. His body, which was almost naked, was quite hairless except for a heavy growth on his head and for eyebrows and eyelashes. He spoke the same language as the Morgors. U Dan and I had been conversing in the universal language of Barsoom. I was surprised that the man had been able to understand us. U Dan and I were both silent for a moment.

"Perhaps," suggested our cell mate, "you do not understand the language of Eurobus—eh?"

"We do," I said, "but we were surprised that you understood our language."

The fellow laughed. "I did not," he said. "You mentioned the Morgors, so I knew that you were speaking of them; and then, when your companion discovered me, he warned you to silence; so I guessed that you were saying something uncomplimentary about our captors. Tell me—who are you? You are no Morgors, nor do you look like us Savators."

"We are from Barsoom," I said.

"The Morgors call it Garobus," explained U Dan.

"I have heard of it," said the Savator. "It is a world that lies far above the clouds. The Morgors are going to invade it. I suppose they have captured you either to obtain information from you or to hold you as hostages."

"For both purposes, I imagine," said U Dan. "Why are you imprisoned?"

"I accidentally bumped into a Morgor who was crossing an avenue at an intersection. He struck me and I knocked him down. For that, I shall be destroyed at the graduation exercises of the next class."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"The education of the Morgor youth consists almost wholly of

subjects and exercises with the art of war. Because it is spectacular, because it arouses the blood lust of the participants and the spectators, personal combat winds up the exercises upon graduation day. Those of the graduating class who survive are inducted into the warrior caste—the highest caste among the Morgors. Art, literature, and science, except as they may pertain to war, are held in contempt by the Morgors. They have been kept alive upon Eurobus only through the efforts of us Savators; but, unfortunately, to the neglect of offensive military preparation and training. Being a peace loving people, we armed only for defense.” He smiled ruefully and shrugged. “But wars are not won by defensive methods.”

“Tell us more about the graduating exercises,” said U Dan. “The idea is intriguing. With whom does the graduating class contend?”

“With criminals and slaves,” replied the Savator. “Mostly men of my race,” he added; “although sometimes there are Morgor criminals of the worst types sentenced to die thus. It is supposed to be the most shameful death that a Morgor can die—fighting shoulder to shoulder with members of a lower order against their own kind.”

“Members of a lower order!” I said. “Do the Morgors consider you that?”

“Just a step above the dumb beasts, but accountable for our acts because we are supposed to be able to differentiate between right and wrong—wrong being any word or act or facial expression adversely critical of anything Morgorian or that can be twisted into a subversive act or gesture.”

“And suppose you survive the graduating contest?” I asked. “Are you then set at liberty?”

“In theory, yes,” he replied; “but in practice, never.”

“You mean they fail to honor terms of their own making?” asked U Dan.

The Savator laughed. “They are entirely without honor,” he said, “yet I do not know that they would not liberate one who survived the combats; because, insofar as I know, no one ever has. You see, the members of the graduating class outnumber their antagonists two to one.”

This statement gave me a still lower estimate of the character

of the Morgors than I had already inferred from my own observation of them. It is not usual that a warlike people excel in chivalry and a sense of honor; but where all other characteristics are made subservient to brutality, finer humanistic instincts atrophy and disappear.

We sat in silence for some time. It was broken by the Savator. "I do not know your names," he said. "Mine is Zan Dar."

As I told him ours, a detail of Morgor warriors came to our cell and ordered U Dan and me to accompany them. "Good-by!" said Zan Dar. "We probably shall never meet again."

"Shut up, thing!" admonished one of the warriors.

Zan Dar winked at me and laughed. The Morgor was furious. "Silence, creature!" he growled. I thought for a moment that he was going to fall upon Zan Dar with his sword, but he who was in charge of the detail ordered him out of the cell. The incident was but another proof of the egomaniac arrogance of the Morgors. However, it helped to crystallize within me an admiration and liking for the Savator that had been growing since first he spoke to us.

U Dan and I were led across the plaza to a very large building the entrance to which was heavily guarded. The hideous, grinning, skull-like heads of the warriors and their skeletal limbs and bodies, together with the dark and cavernous entrance to the building suggested a grisly fantasia of hell's entrance guarded by the rotting dead. It was not a pleasant thought.

We were held here for quite some time, during which some of the warriors discussed us as one might discuss a couple of stray alley cats. "They are like the Savators and yet unlike them," said one.

"They are quite as hideous," said another.

"One of them is much darker than the other."

Now, for the first time, I was struck by the color of these Morgors. Instead of being ivory color, they were a pink or rosy shade. I looked at U Dan. He was a very dark red. A glance at my arms and hands showed that they, too, were dark red; but not as dark a red as U Dan. At first I was puzzled; then I realized that the reflection of the red glare of the volcanoes from the inner surface of the cloud envelope turned our reddish skins a darker red and made the yellow, parchmentlike skins of the Morgors appear pink. As I looked around, I realized that this same reddish hue appeared upon everything within sight. It reminded me of a

verse in a popular song I heard some time ago on one of my visits to earth. It went, I think: "I am looking at the world through rose colored glasses, and everything is rosy now." Well, everything wasn't rosy with me, no matter how rosy this world looked.

Presently an officer came to the entrance and ordered our escort to bring us in. The interior of the building was as unlovely as its exterior. Although this was, as I later learned, the principal palace of the Morgor ruler, there was absolutely no sign of ornamentation. No art relieved the austerity of gloomy, lava-brown corridors and bare, rectangular chambers. No hangings softened the sharp edges of openings; no rugs hid even a part of the bare, brown floors. The pictureless walls frowned down upon us. I have seldom been in a more depressing environment. Even the pits beneath the deserted cities of Barsoom often had interesting vaulted ceilings, arched doorways, elaborate old iron grill work, attesting the artistic temperaments of their designers. The Morgors, like death, were without art.

We were led to a large, bare chamber in which a number of Morgors were clustered about a desk at which another of the creatures was seated. All Morgors look very much alike to me, yet they do have individual facial and physical characteristics; so I was able to recognize Haglion among those standing about the desk. It was Haglion who had commanded the ship that had brought me from Mars.

U Dan and I were halted at some distance from the group, and as we stood here two other red Martians were brought into the room—a man and a girl. The girl was very beautiful.

"Vaja!" exclaimed U Dan, but I did not need this evidence to know who she was. It was equally certain that the man was Multis Par, Prince of Zor. He appeared nervous and downcast, but even so the natural arrogance of the man was indelibly stamped upon his features.

At U Dan's exclamation, one of those guarding us whispered, "Silence, thing!" Vaja's eyes went wide in incredulity as she recognized my companion; and she took an impulsive step toward him, but a warrior seized her arm and restrained her. The faint shadow of a malicious smile touched the thin lips of Multis Par.

The man seated at the desk issued an order, and all four of us

were brought forward and lined up in front of him. The fellow differed in appearance not at all from other Morgors. He wore no ornaments. His harness and weapons were quite plain but evidently serviceable. They were marked with a hieroglyph that differed from similar markings on the harness and weapons of the other Morgors, as those of each of the others differed from all the rest. I did not know then what they signified; but later learned that each hieroglyph indicated the name, rank, and title of him who wore it. The hieroglyph of the man at the desk was that of Bandolian, Emperor of the Morgors.

Spread upon the desk before Bandolian was a large map, which I instantly recognized as that of Barsoom. The man and his staff had evidently been studying it. As U Dan and I were halted before his desk with Vaja and Multis Par, Bandolian looked up at the Prince of Zor.

"Which is he," he asked, "who is called Warlord of Barsoom?" Multis Par indicated me, and Bandolian turned his hollow eyes upon me. It was as though Death had looked upon me and singled me out as his own. "I understand that your name is John Carter," he said. I nodded in affirmation. "While you are of a lower order," he continued, "yet it must be that you are endowed with intelligence of a sort. It is to this intelligence that I address my commands. I intend to invade and conquer Barsoom (he called it Garobs), and I command you to give me all the assistance in your power by acquainting me and my staff with such military information as you may possess relative to the principal powers of Garobus, especially that one known as the Empire of Helium. In return for this your life will be spared."

I looked at him for a moment, and then I laughed in his face. The faintest suggestion of a flush overspread the pallor of his face. "You dare laugh at me, thing!" he growled.

"It is my answer to your proposition," I said.

Bandolian was furious. "Take it away and destroy it!" he ordered.

"Wait, Great Bandolian!" urged Multis Par. "His knowledge is almost indispensable to you, and I have a plan whereby you may make use of it."

"What is it?" he demanded.

"He has a mate whom he worships. Seize her and he will pay any price to protect her from harm."

"Not the price the Morgor has asked," I said to Multis Par,

"and if she is brought here it will be the seal upon your death warrant."

"Enough of this," snapped Bandolian. "Take them all away."

"Shall I destroy the one called John Carter?" asked the officer who commanded the detail that had brought us to the chamber.

"Not immediately."

"He struck a Morgor," said Haglion; "one of my officers."

"He shall die for that, too," said Bandolian.

"That will be twice," I said.

"Take it away!" snapped Bandolian.

As we were led away, Vaja and U Dan gazed longingly at one another.

Chapter V

Zan Dar, the Savator, was surprised to see us return to the cell in so short a time. "In fact," he said, "I did not expect ever to see you again. How did it happen?"

I explained briefly what had occurred in the audience chamber, adding, "I have been returned to the cell to await death."

"And you, U Dan?" he asked.

"I don't know why they bothered to take me up there," replied U Dan. "Bandolian paid no attention to me whatever."

"He had a reason, you may rest assured. He is probably trying to break down your morale by letting you see the girl you love, in the belief that you will influence John Carter to accede to his demands. John Carter lives only because Bandolian hopes to eventually break down his resistance."

Time dragged heavily in that cell beneath the Morgor city. There was no means for determining the passage of time. For that matter, there would have been none had we been above ground, for there are no nights upon Jupiter. It is always day. The sun, four hundred eighty-three million miles away, would shed but little light upon the planet even were it exposed to the full light of the star that is the center of our solar system; but that little light is obscured by the dense cloud envelope which surrounds this distant world. What little filters through is negated by the gigantic volcanic torches which bathe the entire planet in perpetual daylight. Although Jupiter rotates upon its axis in less than ten hours, its day is for eternity.

U Dan and I learned much concerning conditions on the planet from Zan Dar. He told us of the vast warm seas which seethed in constant tidal agitation resulting from the constantly changing positions of the four larger moons which revolve about Jupiter in forth-two hours, eighty-five hours, one hundred seventy-two hours, and four hundred hours respectively while the planet spins upon its axis, making a complete revolution in nine hours and fifty-five minutes. He told us of vast continents and enormous islands; and I could well imagine that such existed, as a rough estimate indicated that the area of the planet exceeded twenty-three billion square miles.

As the axis of Jupiter is nearly perpendicular to the plane of its motion, having an inclination of only about 3° , there could be no great variety of seasons; so over this enormous area there existed an equable climate, warm and humid, perpetually lighted and heated by the innumerable volcanoes which pit the surface of the planet. And here was I, an adventurer who had explored two worlds, cooped up in a subterranean cell upon the most amazing and wonderful planet of our entire solar system! It was maddening.

Zan Dar told us that the continent upon which we were was the largest. It was the ancestral home of the Morgor Governor-General, paid tribute to the Morgors in manufactured goods, foodstuffs, and slaves. There were still a few areas, small and considered of little value by the Morgors, which retained their liberty and their own governments. From such an area came Zan Dar—a remote island called Zanor.

"It is a land of tremendous mountains, thickly forested with trees of great size and height," he said. "Because of our mountains and our forests, it is an easy land to defend against an air borne enemy."

When he told me the height of some of the lofty peaks of Zanor, it was with difficulty that I could believe him: to a height of twenty miles above sea level rose the majestic king of Zanor's mountains.

"The Morgors have sent many an expedition against us," said Zan Dar. "They get a foothold in some little valley; and there, above them and surrounding them in mountain vastnesses that are familiar to us and unknown to them, we have had them at our

mercy, picking them off literally one by one until they are so reduced in numbers that they dare remain no longer. They kill many of us, too; and they take prisoners. I was taken thus in one of their invasions. If they brought enough ships and enough men, I suppose they could conquer us; but our land is scarcely worth the effort, and I think they prefer to leave us as we are to give their recruits practice in actual warfare."

I don't know how long we had been confined when Multis Par was brought to our cell by an officer and a detachment of warriors. He came to exhort me to co-operate with Bandolian.

"The invasion and conquest of Barsoom are inevitable," he said. "By assisting Bandolian you can mitigate the horror of it for the inhabitants of Barsoom. You will thus be serving our world far better than by stupidity and stubbornly refusing to meet Bandolian half way."

"You are wasting your time," I said.

"But our own lives depend upon it," he cried. "You and U Dan, Vaja and I shall die if you refuse. Bandolian's patience is almost worn out now." He looked pleadingly at U Dan.

"We could not die in a better cause," said U Dan, much to my surprise. "I shall be glad to die in atonement for the wrong that I did John Carter."

"You are two fools!" exclaimed Multis Par, angrily.

"At least we are not traitors," I reminded him.

"You will die, John Carter," he growled, "but before you die, you shall see your mate in the clutches of Bandolian. She has been sent for. Now, if you change your mind, send word by one of those who bring your meals."

I sprang forward and knocked the creature down. I should have killed him then had not the Morgors dragged him from the cell.

So they had sent for Dejah Thoris—and I was helpless. They would get her. I knew how they would get her—by assuring her that only through her co-operation could my immediate death be averted. I wondered if they would win. Would I, in the final test, sacrifice my beloved princess or my adopted country? Frankly, I did not know; but I had the example of U Dan to guide me. He had placed patriotism above love. Would I?

Time dragged on in this gloomy cell where there was no time.

We three plotted innumerable futile plans of escape. We improvised games to help mitigate the monotony of our dull existence. More profitably, however, U Dan and I learned much from Zan Dar concerning this great planet. And Zan Dar learned much of what lay beyond the eternal cloud envelope which hides from the view of the inhabitants of Jupiter the sun, the other planets, the stars, and even their own moons. All that Zan Dar knew of them was the little he had been able to glean from remarks dropped by Morgors of what had been seen from their interplanetary ships. Their knowledge of astronomy was only slightly less than their interest in the subject, which was practically non-existent. War, conquest, and bloodshed were their sole interests in life.

At last there came a break in the deadly monotony of our lives: a new prisoner was thrown into the cell with us. And he was a Morgor! The situation was embarrassing. Had our numbers been reversed, had there been three Morgors and one of us, there would have been no doubt as to the treatment that one would have received. He would have been ostracized, imposed upon, and very possibly abused. The Morgor expected this fate. He went into a far corner of the cell and awaited what he had every reason to expect. U Dan, Zan Dar, and I discussed the situation in whispers. That must have been a trying time for the Morgor. We three finally decided to treat the creature simply as a fellow prisoner until such time as his own conduct should be our eventual guide. Zan Dar was the first to break the ice. In a friendly manner he asked what mischance had brought the fellow to this pass.

"I killed one who had an influential relative in the palace of Bandolian," he replied, and as he spoke he came over closer to us. "For that I shall die, probably in the graduating exercises of the next class. We shall doubtless all die together," he added with a hollow laugh. He paused. "Unless we escape," he concluded.

"Then we shall die," said Zan Dar.

"Perhaps," said the Morgor.

"One does not escape from the prisons of the Morgors," said Zan Dar.

I was interested in that one word "perhaps." It seemed to me fraught with intentional meaning. I determined to cultivate this animated skeleton. It could do no harm and might lead to good. I told him my name and the names of my companions; then I asked his.

"Vorion," he replied, "but I need no introduction to you, John

Carter. We have met before. Don't you recognize me?" I had to admit that I did not. Vorion laughed. "I slapped your face and you knocked me across the ship. It was a noble blow. For a long time they thought I was dead."

"Oh," I said, "you were one of my instructors. It may please you to know that I am going to die for that blow."

"Perhaps not," said Vorion. There was that "perhaps" again.

Much to our surprise, Vorion proved not at all a bad companion. Toward Bandolian and the powerful forces that had condemned him to death and thrown him into prison he was extremely bitter. I learned from him that the apparent veneration and loyalty accorded Bandolian by his people was wholly a matter of disciplined regimentation. At heart, Vorion loathed the man as a monster of cruelty and tyranny. "Fear and generations of training hold our apparent loyalty," he said.

After he had been with us for some time, he said to me, "You three have been very decent to me. You could have made my life miserable here; and I could not have blamed you had you done so, for you must hate us Morgors."

"We are all in the same boat," I said. "We could gain nothing by fighting among ourselves. If we work together—perhaps—" I used his own perhaps.

Vorion nodded. "I have been thinking that we might work together," he said.

"To what end?" I asked.

"Escape."

"Is that possible?"

"Perhaps."

U Dan and Zan Dar were eager listeners. Vorion turned to the latter. "If we should escape," he said, "You three have a country to which you might go with every assurance of finding asylum, while I could expect only death in any country upon the face of the Eurobus. If you could promise me safety in your country—" He paused, evidently awaiting Zan Dar's reaction.

"I could only promise to do my best for you," said Zan Dar; "but I am confident that if you were the means of my liberation and return to Zanor, you would be permitted to remain there in safety."

Our plotting was interrupted by the arrival of a detail of war-

riors. The officer in command singled me out and ordered me from the cell. If I were to be separated from my companions, I saw the fabric of my dream of escape dissolve before my eyes.

They led me from the building and across the plaza to the palace of Bandolian, and after some delay I found myself again in the audience chamber. From behind his desk, the hollow eyes of the tyrant stared at me from their grinning skull. "I am giving you your last chance," said Bandolian, then he turned to one of his officers. "Bring in the other," he said. There was a short wait, and then a door at my right opened and a guard of warriors brought in the "other." It was Dejah Thoris! My incomparable Dejah Thoris!

What a lovely creature she was as she crossed the floor surrounded by hideous Morgors. What majestic dignity, what fearlessness distinguished her carriage and her mien! That such as she should be sacrificed even for a world! They halted her scarce two paces from me. She gave me a brave smile, and whispered, "Courage! I know now why I am here. Do not weaken. Better death than dishonor."

"What is she saying?" demanded Bandolian.

I thought quickly. I knew that the chances were that not one of them there understood the language of Barsoom. In their stupid arrogance they would not deign to master the tongue of a lower order.

"She but pleads with me to save her," I said. I saw Dejah Thoris smile. Evidently they had taught her the language of the Morgors on the long voyage from Mars.

"And you will be wise to do so," said Bandolian, "Otherwise she will be given to Multis Par and afterward tortured and mutilated many times before she is permitted to die."

I shuddered in contemplation of such a fate for my princess, and in that moment I weakened once again. "If I aid you, will she be returned unharmed to Helium?" I asked.

"Both of you will—after I have conquered Garobus," replied Bandolian.

"No! No!" whispered Dejah Thoris. "I should rather die than return to Helium with a traitor. No, John Carter, you could never be that even to save my life."

"But the torture! The mutilation! I would be a traitor a thou-

sand time over to save you from that, and I can promise you that no odium would be attached to you: I should never return to Barsoom."

"I shall be neither tortured nor mutilated," she said. "Sewn into my harness is a long, thin blade."

I understood and I was relieved. "Very well," I said. "If we are to die for Barsoom, it is no more than thousands of her brave warriors have done in the past; but we are not dead yet. Remember that, my princess; and do not use that long, thin blade upon yourself until hope is absolutely dead."

"While you live, hope will live," she said.

"Come! Come!" said Bandolian. "I have listened long enough to your silly jabbering. Do you accept my proposition?"

"I am considering it," I said, "but I must have a few more words with my mate."

"Let them be few," snapped the Morgor.

I turned to Dejah Thoris. "Where are you imprisoned?" I asked.

"On the top floor of a tower at the rear of this building at the corner nearest the great vulcano. There is another Barsoomian with me—a girl from Zor. Her name is Vaja."

Bandolian was becoming impatient. He drummed nervously on his desk with his knuckles and snapped his grinning jaws together like castanets. "Enough of this!" he growled. "What is your decision?"

"The matter is one of vast importance to me," I replied. "I cannot decide it in a moment. Return me to my cell so that I may think it over and discuss it with U Dan, who also has much at stake."

"Take it back to its cell," ordered Bandolian; and then, to me: "You shall have time, but not much. My patience is exhausted."

Chapter VI

I had no plan. I was practically without hope, yet I had gained at least a brief reprieve for Dejah Thoris. Perhaps a means of escape might offer itself. Upon such unsubstantial fare I fed the shred of hope to which I clung.

My cellmates were both surprised and relieved when I was returned to them. I told them briefly of what had occurred in the

audience chamber of Bandolian. U Dan showed real grief when he learned that Dejah Thoris was in the clutches of the Morgors, and cursed himself for the part he had taken in bringing her and me to a situation in which we faced the alternatives of death or dishonor.

"Vain regrets never got anyone anywhere," I said. "They won't get us out of this cell. They won't get Dejah Thoris and Vaja out of Bandolian's tower. Forget them. We have other things to think about." I turned to Vorion. "You have spoken of the possibility of escape. Explain yourself."

He was not accustomed to being spoken to thus peremptorily by one of the lower orders, as the Morgors considered us; but he laughed, taking it in good part. The Morgors cannot smile. From birth to death they wear their death's head grin—frozen, unchangeable.

"There is just a chance," he said. "It is just barely a chance. Slender would be an optimistic description of it, but if it fails we shall be no worse off than we are now."

"Tell us what it is," I said.

"I can pick the lock of our cell door," he explained. "If luck is with us, we can escape from this building. I know a way that is little used, for I was for long one of the prison guard."

"What chance would we have once we were in the streets of the city?" demanded U Dan. "We three, at least, would be picked up immediately."

"Not necessarily," said Vorion. "There are many slaves on the avenues who look exactly like Zan Dar. Of course, the color of the skin of you men from Garobus might attract attention; but that is a chance we shall have to take."

"And after we are in the streets?" asked Zan Dar. "What then?"

"I shall pretend that I am in charge of you. I shall treat you as slaves are so often treated that it will arouse no comment nor attract any undue attention. I shall have to be rough with you, but you will understand. I shall herd you to a field where there are many ships. There I shall tell the guard that I have orders to bring you to clean a certain ship. In this field are only the private ships of the rich and powerful among us, and I well know a certain ship that belongs to one who seldom uses it. If we can reach this ship and board it, nothing can prevent us from escaping. In an hour from now, we shall be on our way to Zanor—if all goes well."

"And if we can take Vaja and Dejah Thors with us," I added.

"I had forgotten them," said Vorion. "You would risk your lives for two females?"

"Certainly," said U Dan.

Vorion shrugged. "You are strange creatures," he said. "We Morgors would not risk a little finger for a score of them. The only reason that we tolerate them at all is that they are needed to replenish the supply of warriors. To attempt to rescue two of yours may easily end in disaster for us all."

"However, we shall make the attempt," I said. "Are you with us, Zan Dar?" I asked the Savator.

"To the end," he said, "whatever it may be."

Again Vorion shrugged. "As you will," he said, but not with much enthusiasm; then he set to work on the lock, and in a very short time the door swung open and we stepped out into the corridor. Vorion closed the door and relocked it. "This is going to give them food for speculation," he remarked.

He led us along the corridor in the opposite direction from that in which we had been brought to it and from which all those had come who had approached our cell since our incarceration. The corridor became dark and dusty the farther we traversed it. Evidently it was little used. At its very end was a door, the lock to which Vorion quickly picked; and a moment later we stepped out into a narrow alleyway.

So simple had been our escape up to now that I immediately apprehended the worst: such luck could not last. Even the alley which we had entered was deserted: no one had seen us emerge from the prison. But when we reached the end of the alley and turned into a broad avenue, the situation was very different. Here were many people—Morgors upon the sidewalks, slaves in the gutters, strange beasts of burden carrying their loads of passengers upon the pavement.

Now, Vorion began to berate and cuff us as we walked in the gutter and he upon the sidewalk. He directed us away from the central plaza and finally into less frequented avenues, yet we still passed too many Morgors to suit me. At any minute one of them might notice the unusual coloration of U Dan's skin and mine. I glanced at Zan Dor to note if the difference between his coloration and ours was at all startling, and I got a shock. Zan Dar's

skin had been blue. Now it was purple! It took me a moment to realize that the change was due to the rosy light of the volcano's flames turning Zan Dar's natural blue to purple.

We had covered quite a little distance in safety, when a Morgor, passing, eyed us suspiciously. He let us go by him; then he wheeled and called to Vorion. "Who are those two?" he demanded. "They are not Savators."

"They have been ill," said Vorion, "and their color has changed." I was surprised that the fellow could think so quickly.

"Well, who are you?" asked the fellow, "and what are you doing in charge of slaves while unarmed?"

Vorion looked down at his sides in simulated surprise. "Why, I must have forgotten them," he said.

"I think that you are lying to me," said the fellow. "Come along with me, all of you."

Here seemed an end of our hopes of escape. I glanced up and down the street. It appeared to be a quiet, residential avenue. There was no one near us. Several small ships rested at the curb in front of dreary, brown domiciles. That was all. No eyes were upon us. I stepped close to the fellow who had thus rashly presented himself as an obstacle in the way of Dejah Thoris' rescue. I struck him once. I struck him with all my strength. He dropped like a log.

"You have killed him," exclaimed Vorion. "He was one of Bandalion's most trusted officers. If we are caught now, we shall be tortured to death."

"We need not be caught," I said. "Let's take one of these ships standing at the curb. Why take the time and the risk to go farther?"

Vorion shook his head. "They wouldn't do," he said. "They are only for intramural use. They are low altitude ships that would never get over even a relatively small mountain range; but more important still, they cannot be rendered invisible. We shall have to go on to the field as we have planned."

"To avoid another such encounter as we have just experienced," I said, "we had better take one of these ships at least to the vicinity of the field."

"We shall be no worse off adding theft to murder," said Zan Dar.

Vorion agreed, and a moment later we were all in a small ship and sailing along a few yards above the avenue. Keenly interested, I carefully noted everything that Vorion did in starting the motor and controlling the craft. It was necessary for me to ask only a few questions in order to have an excellent grasp of the handling of the little ship, so familiar was I with the air ships of two other worlds. Perhaps I should never have the opportunity to operate one of these, but it could do no harm to know how.

We quitted the flier a short distance from the field and continued on foot. As Vorion had predicted, a guard halted us and questioned him. For a moment everything hung in the balance. The guard appeared skeptical, and the reason for his skepticism was largely that which had motivated the officer I had killed to question the regularity of Vorion's asserted mission—the fact that Vorion was unarmed. The guard told us to wait while he summoned an officer. That would have been fatal. I felt that I might have to kill this man, too; but I did not see how I could do it without being observed, as there were many Morgors upon the field, though none in our immediate vicinity.

Vorion saved the day. "Comel Comel" he exclaimed in a tone of exasperation. "I can't wait here all day while you send for an officer. I am in a hurry. Let me take these slaves on and start them to work. The officer can come to the ship and question me as well as he can question me here."

The guard agreed that there was something in this; and, after ascertaining the name and location of the ship which we were supposed to clean, he permitted us to proceed. I breathed an inward sigh of relief. After we had left him, Vorion said that he had given him the name and location of a different ship than that which we were planning to steal. Vorion was no fool.

The ship that Vorion had selected was a slim craft which appeared to have been designed for speed. We lost no time boarding her; and once again I watched every move that Vorion made, questioning him concerning everything that was not entirely clear to me. Although I had spent some eighteen days aboard one of these Morgorian ships. I had learned nothing relative to their control, as I had never been allowed in the control room nor permitted to ask questions.

First, Vorion magnetized the hull and sprayed it with the fine

sands of invisibility; then he started the motor and nosed up gently. I had explained my plan to him, and once he had gained a little altitude he headed for the palace of Bandolain. Through a tiny lens set in the bow of the ship the view ahead was reflected upon a ground glass plate, just as an image is projected upon the finder of a camera. There were several of these lenses, and through one of them I presently saw the square tower at the rear of the palace, the tower in which Dejah Thoris and Vaja were confined.

"When I bring the ship up to the window," said Vorion, "you will have to work fast, as the moment that we open the door in the ship's hull, part of the interior of the ship will be visible. Someone in the palace or upon the ground may notice it, and instantly we shall be surrounded by guard and patrol ships."

"I shall work fast," I said.

I must admit that I was more excited than usual as Vorion brought the craft alongside the tower window, which we had seen was wide open and unbarred. U Dan and Zan Dar stood by to open the door so that I could leap through the window and then to close it immediately after I had come aboard with the two girls. I could no longer see the window now that the craft was broadside to it; but at a word from Vorion, U Dan and Zan Dar slid the door back. The open window was before me, and I leaped through it into the interior of the tower room.

Fortunately for me, fortunately for Dejah Thoris, and fortunately for Vaja, it was the right room. The two girls were there, but they were not alone. A man held Dejah Thoris in his arms, his lips searching for hers. Vaja was striking him futilely on the back, and Dejah Thoris was trying to push his face from hers.

I seized the man by the neck and hurled him across the room; then I pointed to the window and the ship beyond and told the girls to get aboard as fast as they could. They needed no second invitation. As they ran across the room toward the window, the man rose and faced me. It was Multis Parl. Recognizing me, he went almost white; then he whipped out his sword and simultaneously commenced to shout for the guard.

Seeing that I was unarmed, he came for me. I could not turn and run for the window: had I, he could have run me through long before I could have reached it; so I did the next best thing. I charged straight for him. This apparently suicidal act of mine evidently confused him, for he fell back. But when I was close to

him, he lunged for me. I parried the thrust with my forearm. I was inside his point now, and an instant later my fingers closed upon his throat. Like a fool, he dropped his sword then and attempted to claw my fingers loose with his two hands. He could have shortened his hold on it and run me through the heart, but I had to take that chance.

I would have finished him off in a moment had not the door of the room been thrown open to admit a dozen Morgor warriors. I was stunned! After everything had worked so well, to have this happen. Were all our plans to be thus thwarted? No, not all.

I shouted to U Dan: "Close the door and take off! It is a command!"

U Dan hesitated. Dejah Thoris stood at his side with one hand outstretched toward me and an indescribable expression of anguish on her face. She took a step forward as though to leap from the ship back into the room. U Dan quickly barred her way, and then the ship started to move away. Slowly the door slid closed, and once again the craft was entirely invisible.

All this transpired in but a few seconds while I still clung to Multis Par's throat. His tongue protruded and his eyes stared glassily. In a moment more he would have been dead; then the Morgor warriors were upon me, and I was dragged from my prey.

My captors handled me rather roughly and, perhaps, not without reason, for I had knocked three of them unconscious before they overpowered me. Had I but had a sword! What I should have done to them then! But though I was battered and bruised as they hustled me down from the tower, I was smiling; for I was happy. Dejah Thoris had been snatched from the clutches of the skeleton men and was, temporarily at least, safe. I had good cause for rejoicing.

I was taken to a small, unlighted cell beneath the tower; and here I was manacled and chained to the wall. A heavy door was slammed shut as my captors left me, and I heard a key turn in a massive lock.

Alone, in utter darkness, I awaited my fate.

Chapter VII

In solitary confinement unrelieved by even a suggestion of light, one is thrown entirely upon the resources of one's thoughts for mitigation of absolute boredom—such boredom as sometimes leads to insanity for those of weak wills and feeble nerves. But my thoughts were pleasant thoughts. I envisaged Dejah Thoris safely bound for a friendly country in an invisible ship which would be safe from capture, and I felt that three of those who accompanied her would be definitely friendly and that one of them, U Dan, might be expected to lay down his life to protect her were that ever necessary. As to Vorion, I could not even guess what his attitude toward her would be.

My own situation gave me little concern. I will admit that it looked rather hopeless, but I had been in tight places before and yet managed to survive and escape. I still lived, and while life is in me I never give up hope. I am a confirmed optimist, which, I think, gives me an attitude of mind that more often than not commands what we commonly term the breaks of life.

Fortunately, I was not long confined in that dark cell. I slept once, for how long I do not know; and I was very hungry when a detail of warriors came to take me away; hungry and thirsty, for they had given me neither food nor water while I had been confined.

I was not taken before Bandolian this time, but to one of his officers—a huge skeleton that continually opened and closed its jaws with a snapping and grinding sound. The creature was Death incarnate. From the way he questioned me, I concluded that he must be the lord high inquisitor. In silence, he eyed me from those seemingly hollow sockets for a full minute before he spoke; then he bellowed at me.

"Thing," he shouted, "for even a small part of what you have done you deserve death—death after torture."

"You don't have to shout at me," I said; "I'm not deaf."

That enraged him, and he pounded upon his desk. "For impudence and disrespect it will go harder with you."

"I cannot show respect when I do not feel respect," I told him. "I respect only those who command my respect. I surely could not respect a bag of bones with an evil disposition."

I do not know why I deliberately tried to infuriate him. Perhaps it is just a weakness of mine to enjoy baiting enemies whom I think contemptible. It is, I admit a habit fraught with danger; and, perhaps, a stupid habit; but I have found that it sometimes so disconcerts an enemy as to give me a certain advantage. In this instance I was at least successful in part; the creature was so furious that for some time it remained speechless; then it leaped to its feet with drawn sword.

My situation was far from enviable. I was unarmed, and the creature facing me was in an uncontrollable rage. In addition to all this, there were four or five other Morgors in the room, two of whom were holding my arms—one on either side. I was as helpless as a sheep in an abattoir. But as my would-be executioner came around the end of his desk to spit me on his blade, another Morgor entered the room.

The newcomer took in the situation at a glance, and shouted, "Stop, Gorgum!" The thing coming for me hesitated; then he dropped his point.

"The creature deserves death," Gorgum said, sullenly. "It defied and insulted me—me, an officer of the Great Bandolian!"

"Vengeance belongs to Bandolian," said the other, "and he has different plans for this insolent worm. What has your questioning developed?"

"He has been so busy screaming at me that he has had no time to question me," I said.

"Silence, low one!" snapped the newcomer. "I can well understand," he said to Gorgum, "that your patience must have been sorely tried; but we must respect the wishes of the Great Bandolian. Proceed with the investigation."

Gorgum returned his sword to its scabbard and reseated himself at his desk. "What is your name?" he demanded.

"John Carter, Prince of Helium," I replied. A scribe at Gorgum's side scribbled in a large book. I supposed that he was recording the question and the answer. He kept this up during the entire interview.

"How did you and the other conspirators escape from the cell in which you were confined?" Gorgum asked.

"Through the doorway," I replied.

"That is impossible. The door was locked when you were

placed in the cell. It was locked at the time your absence was discovered."

"If you know so much, why bother to question me?"

Gorgum's jaws snapped and ground more viciously than ever. "You see, Horur," he said angrily, turning to the other officer, "the insolence of the creature."

"Answer the noble Gorgum's question," Horur snapped at me. "How did you pass through a locked door?"

"It was not locked."

"It *was* locked," shouted Gorgum.

I shrugged. "What is the use?" I asked. "It is a waste of time to answer the questions of one who knows more about the subject than I, notwithstanding the fact that he was not there."

"Tell me, then, in your own words how you escaped from the cell," said Horur in a less irritating tone of voice.

"We picked the lock."

"That would have been impossible," bellowed Gorgum.

"Then we are still in the cell," I said. "Perhaps you had better go and look."

"We are getting nowhere," snapped Horur.

"Rapidly," I agreed.

"I shall question the prisoner," said Horur. "We concede that you did escape from the cell."

"Rather shrewd of you."

He ignored the comment. "I cannot see that the means you adopted are of great importance. What we really wish to know is where your accomplices and the two female prisoners are now. Multis Par says that they escaped in a ship—probably one of our own which was stolen from a flying field."

"I do not know where they are."

"Do you know where they planned to go?"

"If I did, I would not tell you."

"I command you to answer me, on pain of death."

I laughed at the creature. "You intend to kill me anyway; so your threat finds me indifferent."

Horur kept his temper much better than had Gorgum, but I could see that he was annoyed. "You could preserve your life if you were more co-operative," he said. "Great Bandolian asks but little of you. Tell us where your accomplices intended going and

promise to aid Great Bandolian in his conquest of Helium, and your life will be spared."

"No," I said.

"Wait," urged Horur. "Bandolian will go even further. Following our conquest of Helium, he will permit you and your mate to return to that country and he will give you a high office in the new government he intends to establish there. If you refuse, you shall be destroyed; your mate will be hunted down and, I promise you, she will be found. Her fate will be infinitely worse than death. You had better think it over."

"I do not need to think over such a proposition. I can give you a final answer on both counts—my irrevocable answer. It is—never!"

If Horur had had a lip, he would doubtless have bitten it. He looked at me for a long minute; then he said, "Fool!" after which he turned to Gorgum. "Have it placed with those who are being held for the next class;" then he left the room.

I was now taken to a building located at some distance from those in which I had previously been incarcerated, and placed in a large cell with some twenty other prisoners, all of whom were Savators.

"What have we here?" demanded one of my fellow prisoners after my escort had left and locked the door. "A man with a red skin! He is no Savator. What are you, fellow?"

I did not like the looks of him, nor his tone of voice. I was not seeking trouble with those with whom I was to be imprisoned and with whom I was probably destined to die; so I walked away from the fellow and sat down on a bench in another part of the chamber, which was quite large. But the fool followed me and stood in front of me in a truculent attitude.

"I asked you what you were," he said, threateningly; "and when Pho Lar asks you a question, see that you answer it—and quickly. I am top man here." He looked around at the others. "That's right, isn't it?" he demanded of them.

There were some sullen, affirmative grunts. I could see at once that the fellow was unpopular. He appeared a man of considerable muscular development; and his reception of me, a newcomer among them, testified to the fact that he was a bully. It was evident that he had the other prisoners cowed.

"You seem to be looking for trouble, Lo Phar," I said; "but I am not. I am already in enough trouble."

"My name is Pho Lar, fellow," he barked.

"What difference does it make? You would stink by any name." The other prisoners immediately took interested notice. Some of them grinned.

"I see that I shall have to put you in your place," said Pho Lar, advancing toward me angrily.

"I do not want any trouble with you," I said. "It is bad enough to be imprisoned, without quarrelling with fellow prisoners."

"You are evidently a coward," said Pho Lar; "so, if you will get down on your knees and ask my pardon, I shall not harm you."

I had to laugh at that, which made the fellow furious; yet he hesitated to attack me. I realized then that he was a typical bully—yellow at heart. However, to save his face, he would probably attack me if he could not bluff me. "Don't make me angry," he said. "When I am angry I do not know my own strength. I might kill you."

"I wonder if this would make you angry," I said, and slapped him across the cheek with my open palm. I slapped him so hard that he nearly fell down. I could have slapped him harder. This staggered him more than physically. The blood rushed to his blue face until it turned purple. He was in a spot. He had started something; and if he were to hold his self-appointed position as top man, as he had described himself, he would have to finish it. The other prisoners had now all arisen and formed a half circle about us. They looked alternately at Pho Lar and at me in eager anticipation.

Pho Lar had to do something about that slap in the face. He rushed at me and struck out clumsily. As I warded off his blows, I realized that he was a very powerful man; but he lacked science, and I was sure that he lacked guts. I determined to teach him a lesson that he would not soon forget. I could have landed a blow in the first few seconds of our encounter that would have put him to sleep, but I preferred to play with him.

I countered merely with another slap in the face. He came back with a haymaker that I ducked; then I slapped him again—a little harder this time.

"Good work!" exclaimed one of the prisoners.

"Go to it, red man!" cried another.

"Kill him!" shouted a third.

Pho Lar tried to clinch, but I caught one of his wrists, wheeled around, bent over, and threw him over my shoulder. He lit heavily on the lava flooring. He lay there for a moment, and as he scrambled to his feet I put a headlock on him and threw him again. This time he did not get up; so I picked him up and hit him on the chin. He went down for a long count. I was through with him, and went and sat down.

The prisoners gathered around me. I could see that they were pleased with the outcome of the fight. "Pho Lar's had this coming to him for a long time," said one.

"He sure got it at last!"

"Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is John Carter. I am from Garobus."

"I have heard of you," said one. "I think we all have. The Morgors are furious at you because you tricked them so easily. I suppose they have sent you here to die with us. My name is Han Du." He held out a hand to me. It was the first time that I had seen this friendly gesture since leaving the earth. The Martians place a hand upon your shoulder. I took his hand.

"I am glad to know you, Han Du," I said. "If there are many more here like Pho Lar, I shall probably need a friend."

"There are no more like him," said Han Du, "and he is finished."

"You intimated that we are all doomed to die," I said. "Do you know when or how?"

"When the next class graduates, we shall be pitted against twice our number of Morgors. It will be soon, now."

Chapter VIII

Pho Lar was unconscious for a long time. For a while, I thought that I might have killed him, but finally he opened his eyes and looked about. Then he sat up, felt of his head, and rubbed his jaw. When his eyes found me, he dropped them to the floor. Slowly and painfully he got to his feet and started for the far side of the room. Four or five of the prisoners immediately surrounded him.

"Who's top man now?" demanded one of them and slapped his

face. Two more struck him. They were pushing him around and buffeting him when I walked among them and pushed them away.

"Leave him alone," I said. "He has had enough punishment for a while. When he has recovered, if one of you wishes to take him on, that will be all right, but you can't gang up on him."

The biggest of them turned and faced me. "What have *you* got to say about it?" he demanded.

"This," I replied, and knocked him down.

He sat up and looked at me. "I was just asking," he said, and grinned a sickly grin; then everybody laughed and the tension was over. After this, we got along famously—all of us, even Pho Lar; and I found them all rather decent men. Long imprisonment and the knowledge that they were facing death had frayed their nerves; but what had followed my advent had cleared the air, much as a violent electrical storm does. After that there was a lot of laughing and talking.

I inquired if any of them were from Zan Dar's country—Zanor, but none of them was. Several of them knew where it was, and one scratched a rough map of part of Jupiter on the wall of our cell to show me where Zanor was located. "But much good it will do you to know," he said.

"One never can tell," I replied.

They had told me what I was to expect at the graduating exercises, and I gave the subject considerable thought. I did not propose attending a Morgor commencement in the role of a willing sacrifice.

"How many of you men are expert swordsmen?" I asked.

About half of them claimed to be, but it is a failing of fighting men to boast of their prowess. Not of all fighting men, but of many—usually those with the least to boast of. I wished that I had some means of determining which were really good.

"Of course we can't get hold of any swords," I said, "but if we had some sticks about the length of swords, we could soon find out who were the best swordsmen among us."

"What good would that do us?" asked one.

"We could give those Morgors a run for their money," I said. "and make them pay for their own graduation."

"The slave who brings our food is from my country," said Han Du. "I think he might smuggle a couple of sticks in to us. He is a good fellow. I'll ask him when he comes."

Pho Lar had said nothing about his swordsmanship; so, as he had proved himself a great boaster, I felt that he was not a swordsman at all. I was sorry, as he was by far the most powerful of all the Savator prisoners; and he was tall, too. With a little skill, he should have proved a most formidable swordsman. Han Du never boasted about anything; but he said that in his country the men were much given to sword play, so I was counting on him.

Finally, Han Du's compatriot smuggled in a couple of wooden rods about the length of a longsword; and I went to work to ascertain how my fellow prisoners stacked up as swordsmen. Most of them were good; a few were excellent; Han Du was magnificent; and, much to everyone's surprise, Pho Lar was superb. He gave me one of the most strenuous workouts I have ever had before I could touch him. It must have taken me nearly an hour to disarm him. He was one of the greatest swordsmen I had ever faced.

Since our altercation upon my induction to their company, Pho Lar had kept much to himself. He seldom spoke, and I thought he might be brooding and planning on revenge. I had to find out just where he stood, as I could not take any chances on treachery or even half-hearted co-operation.

I took Pho Lar aside after our passage with the wooden sticks. I put my cards squarely on the table. "My plan," I said, "requires as many good swordsmen as I can get. You are one of the finest I have ever met, but you may think that you have reason to dislike me and therefore be unwilling to give me your full support. I cannot use any man who will not follow me and obey me even to death. How about it?"

"I will follow wherever you lead," he said. "Here is my hand on it—if you will take my hand in friendship."

"I am glad to do it."

As we grasped hands, he said, "If I had known a man like you years ago, I should not have been the fool that I have been. You may count on me to my last drop of blood, and before you and I die we shall have shown the Morgors something that they will never forget. They think that they are great swordsmen, but after they have seen you in action they will have their doubts. I can scarcely wait for the time."

I was impressed by Pho Lar's protestations. I felt that he was sincere, but I could not disabuse my mind of my first impression that he was at heart an arrant coward. But perhaps, facing death, he would fight as a cornered rat fights. If he did, and didn't lose his head, he would wreak havoc on the Morgors.

There were twenty of us in that cell. No longer did time drag heavily. It passed quickly in practice with our two wooden rods. Han Du, Pho Lar, and I, acting as instructors, taught the others what tricks of swordsmanship we knew until we were twenty excellent swordsmen. Several were outstanding.

We discussed several plans of action. We knew that, if custom prevailed, we should be pitted against forty young Morgor cadets striving to win to the warrior caste. We decided to fight in pairs, each of our ten best swordsmen being paired with one of the ten less proficient, but this pairing was to follow an initial charge by the first ten, with our team mates close behind us. We hoped thus to eliminate many of the Morgors in the first few moments of the encounter, thus greatly reducing the odds against us. Perhaps we of the first ten overestimated our prowess. Only time would tell.

There was some nervousness among the prisoners, due, I think, to the uncertainty as to when we should be called upon to face those unequal odds. Each knew that some of us would die. If any survived, we had only rumor to substantiate our hope that they would be set free; and no man there trusted the Morgors. Every footfall in the corridor brought silence to the cell, with every eye fixed upon the door.

At long last our anxiety was relieved: a full company of warriors came to escort us to the field where we were to fight. I glanced quickly around at the prisoners' faces. Many were smiling and there were sighs of relief. I felt greatly encouraged.

We were taken to a rectangular field with tiers of seats on each of its four sides. The stands were crowded. Thousands of eyes stared from the hollow sockets of grinning skulls. It might have been a field day in Hell. There was no sound. There were no bands. There were no flying flags—no color. We were given swords and herded together at one end of the field. An official gave us our instructions.

"When the cadets come on the field at the far end, you will advance and engage them." That was all.

"And what of those of us who survive?" I asked.

"None of you will survive, creature," he replied.

"We understood that those who survived would be given their freedom," I insisted.

"None of you will survive," he repeated.

"Would you like to place a little bet on that?"

"None of your impudence, creature!" The fellow was getting angry.

"But suppose one of us should survive?" I demanded.

"In that case his life would be spared and he would be allowed to continue in slavery, but none has ever survived these exercises. The cadets are on the field!" he cried. "Go to your deaths, worms!"

"To your station, worms!" I commanded. The prisoners laughed as they took their allotted positions: the first ten in the front line, each with his partner behind him. I was near the center of the line. Han Du and Pho Lar were on the flanks. We marched forward as we had practiced it in our cell, all in step, the men in the rear rank giving the cadence by chanting, "Death to the Morgors!" over and over. We kept intervals and distance a little greater than the length of an extended sword arm and sword.

It was evident that the Morgors had never seen anything like that at a commencement exercise, for I could hear the hollow sound of their exclamations of surprise arising from the stands; and the cadets advancing to meet us were seemingly thrown into confusion. They were spread out in pairs in a line that extended almost all the way across the field, and it suddenly became a very ragged line. When we were about twenty-five feet from this line, I gave the command, "Charge."

We ten, hitting the center of their line, had no odds against us: the Morgors had spread their line too thin. They saw swordsmanship in those first few seconds such as I'll warrant no Morgor ever saw before. Ten Morgors lay dead or dying on the field, as five of our first ten wheeled toward the right, followed by our partners; our remaining ten men wheeled left.

As we had not lost a man in the first onslaught, each ten was now pitted against fifteen of the enemy. The odds were not so heavily against us. Taking each half of the Morgor line on its flank, as we now were, gave us a great advantage; and we took

heavy toll of them before those on the far flanks could get into action, with the result that we were presently fighting on an almost even footing, our partners having now come into action.

The Morgors fought with fanatic determination. Many of them were splendid swordsmen, but none of them was a match for any of our first ten. I caught an occasional glimpse of Pho Lar. He was magnificent. I doubt that any swordsman of any of the three worlds upon which I had fought could have touched Pho Lar, Han Du, or me with his point, and there were seven more almost as good.

Within fifteen minutes of the start of the engagement, all that remained was the mopping up of the surviving Morgors. We had lost ten men, all of the first ten swordsmen having survived. As the last of the Morgors fell, one could almost feel the deathly silence that had settled upon the audience.

The nine gathered around me. "What now?" asked Pho Lar.

"How many of you want to go back to slavery?" I asked.

"No!" shouted nine voices.

"We are the ten best swords on Eurobus," I said. "We could fight our way out of the city. You men know the country beyond. What chance would we have to escape capture?"

"There would be a chance," said Han Du. "Beyond the city, the jungle comes close. If we could make that, they might never find us."

"Good!" I said, and started at a trot toward a gate at one end of the field, the nine at my heels.

At the gateway, a handful of foolish guardsmen tried to stop us. We left them behind us, dead. Now we heard angry shouts arising from the field we had left, and we guessed that soon we should have hundreds of Morgors in pursuit.

"Who knows the way to the nearest gate?" I demanded.

"I do," said one of my companions. "Follow me!" and he set off at a run.

As we raced through the avenues of the dreary city, the angry shouts of our pursuers followed us, but we held our distance and at last arrived at one of the city gates. Here again we were confronted by armed warriors who compelled us to put up a stiff battle. The cries of the pursuing Morgors grew louder and louder. Soon all that we had gained would be lost. This must not be! I called Pho Lar and Han Du to my side and ordered the remain-

ing seven to give us room, for the gateway was too narrow to wield their blades within it advantageously.

"This time we go through!" I shouted to my two companions as we rushed the surviving guardsmen. And we went through. They hadn't a chance against the three best swordsmen of three worlds.

Miraculous as it may seem, all ten of us won to freedom nothing more than a few superficial scratches to indicate that we had been in a fight, but the howling Morgors were now close on our heels. If there is anything in three worlds that I hate, it is to run from a foe, but it would have been utterly stupid to have permitted several hundred angry Morgors to have overtaken me. I ran.

The Morgors gave up the chase before we reached the jungle. Evidently they had other plans for capturing us. We did not stop until we were far into the tropical verdure of a great forest, then we paused to discuss the future and to rest, and we needed rest.

That forest! I almost hesitate to describe it, so weird, so unearthly was it. Almost wholly deprived of sunlight, the foliage was pale, pale with a deathlike pallor, tinged with rose where the reflected light of the fiery volcanoes filtered through. But this was by far its least uncanny aspect: the limbs of the trees moved like living things. They writhed and twined—myriad, snakelike things. I had scarcely noticed them until we halted. Suddenly one dropped down and wrapped itself about me. Smiling, I sought to dissentwine it. I stopped smiling: I was as helpless as a babe encircled by the trunk of an elephant. The thing started to lift me from the ground, and just then Han Du saw and leaped forward with drawn sword. He grasped one of my legs, and at the same time sprang upward and struck with the keen edge of his blade, severing the limb that had seized me. We dropped to the ground together.

"What the devil!" I exclaimed. "What is it? and why did it do that?"

Han Du pointed up. I looked. Above me, at the end of a strong stem, was a huge blossom—a horrible thing! In its center was a large mouth armed with many teeth, and above the mouth were two staring, lidless eyes.

"I had forgotten," said Han Du, "that you are not of Eurobus. Perhaps you have no such trees as these in your world."

"We certainly have not," I assured him. "A few that eat insects, perhaps, like Venus's-fly-trap, but no maneaters."

"You must always be on your guard when in one of our forests," he warned me. "These trees are living, carnivorous animals. They have a nervous system and a brain, and it is generally believed that they have a language and talk with one another."

Just then a hideous scream broke from above us. I looked up, expecting to see some strange, Jupiterian beast above me, but there was nothing but the writhing limbs and the staring eyes of the great blossoms of the man-trees.

Han Du laughed. "Their nervous systems are of a low order," he said, "and their reactions correspondingly slow and sluggish. It took all this time for the pain of my sword cut to reach the brain of the blossom to which that limb belongs."

"A man's life would never be safe for a moment in such a forest," I commented.

"One has to be constantly on guard," admitted Han Du. "If you ever have to sleep out in the woods, built a smudge. The blossoms don't like smoke. They close up, and then they cannot see to attack you. But be sure that you don't oversleep your smudge."

Vegetable life on Jupiter, practically devoid of sunlight, has developed along entirely different lines from that on earth. Nearly all of it has some animal attributes and nearly all of it is carnivorous, the smaller plants devouring insects, the larger, in turn, depending upon the larger animals for sustenance on up to the maneaters such as I had encountered and those which Han Du said caught and devoured even the hugest animals that exist upon this strange planet.

We posted a couple of guards, who also kept smudges burning, and the rest of us lay down to sleep. One of the men had a chronometer, and this was used to inform the men on guard when to awaken their reliefs. In this way, we all took turns sleeping.

When all had slept, the smudges were allowed to burn more brightly, the men cut limbs from the living trees, sliced them and roasted them. They tasted much like veal. Then we talked over our plans for the future. It was decided that we should split up into parties of two or three and scatter; so that some of us at least

might have a chance to escape recapture. They said that the Morgors would hunt us down for a long time. I felt that we would be much safer remaining together, as we were ten undefeatable sword-arms; but as the countries from which my companions came were widely scattered, and as, naturally, each wished if possible to return to his own home, it was necessary that we separate.

It chanced that Han Du's country lay in the general direction of Zanor, as did Pho Lar's, so we three bid goodby to the others and left them. How I was to reach faraway Zanor on a planet of twenty-three billion square miles of area, I was at some loss to conceive. So was Han Du. He told me that I would be welcome in his country—if we could ever reach it; but I assured him that I should never cease to search for Zanor and my mate.

Chapter IX

I shall not bore you with an account of that part of my odyssey which finally brought me to one of the cities of Han Du's country. We kept as much to cover as we could, since we knew that if Morgors were searching for us, they would be flying low in invisible ships. Forests offered us our best protection from discovery, but there were wide plains to cross, rivers to swim, mountains to climb.

In this world without night, it was difficult to keep account of time; but it seemed to me that we must have travelled for months. Pho Lar remained with us for a great deal of the time, but finally he had to turn away in the direction of his own country. We were sorry to lose him, as he had developed into a splendid companion; and we should miss his sword, too.

We had met no men, but had had several encounters with wild beasts—creatures of hideous, unearthly appearance, both powerful and voracious. I soon realized the inadequacy of our swords as a sole means of defense; so we fashioned spears of a bamboo-like growth that seemed wholly vegetable. I also taught Han Du and Pho Lar how to make bows and arrows and to use them. We found them of great advantage in our hunting of smaller animals and birds for food. In the forests, we subsisted almost wholly on the meat of the man-tree.

At last Han Du and I came within sight of an ocean. "We are

home," he said. "My city lies close beside the sea." I saw no city.

We had come down out of some low hills, and were walking across a narrow coastal plain. Han Du was several yards to my right, when I suddenly bumped into something solid—solid as a brick wall; but there was nothing there! The sudden collision had caused me to step back. I stretched out my hands, and felt what seemed to be a solid wall barring my way, yet only a level expanse of bare ground stretched before me down to the shore where erratic combers surged at cross purposes along the beach. I said bare ground, but the ground was not entirely bare. It was dotted, here and there, with strange plants—a simple, leafless stalk a foot or two tall bearing a single fuzzy blossom at its top.

I looked around for Han Du. He had disappeared! He had just vanished like a punctured soap bubble. All up and down the shore there was no place into which he could have vanished, nothing behind which he could have hidden, no hole in the ground into which he might have darted. I was baffled. I scratched my head in perplexity, as I started on again toward the beach only to once more bump into the wall that was not there.

I put my hands against the invisible wall and followed it. It curved away from me. Foot by foot, I pursued my tantalizing investigation. After a while I was back right where I had started from. It seemed that I had run into an invisible tower of solid air. I started off in a new direction toward the beach, avoiding the obstacle which had obstructed my way. After a dozen paces I ran into another; then I gave up—at least temporarily.

Presently I called Han Du's name aloud, and almost instantly he appeared a short distance from me. "What kind of a game is this?" I demanded. "I bump into a wall of solid air and when I look for you, you have disappeared."

Han Du laughed. "I keep forgetting that you are a stranger in this world," he said. "We have come to the city in which I live. I just stepped into my home to greet my family. That is why you could not see me." As he spoke, a woman appeared beside him, and a little child. They seemed to materialize out of thin air. Had I come to a land of disembodied spirits who had the power to materialize? I could scarcely believe it, as there was nothing ghostly nor ethereal about Han Du.

"This is O Ala, my mate," said Han Du. "O Ala, this is John Carter, Prince of Helium. To him we owe my escape from the Morgors."

O Ala extended her hand to me. It was a firm, warm hand of flesh and blood. "Welcome, John Carter," she said. "All that we have is yours."

It was a sweet gesture of hospitality; but as I looked around, I could not see that they had anything. "Where is the city?" I asked.

They both laughed. "Come with us," said O Ala. She led the way, apparently around an invisible corner; and there, before me, I saw an open doorway in thin air. Through the doorway, I could see the interior of a room. "Come in," invited O Ala, and I followed her into a commodious, circular apartment. Han Du followed and closed the door. The roof of the apartment was a dome perhaps twenty feet high at its center. It was divided into four rooms by sliding hangings which could be closed or drawn back against the wall.

"Why couldn't I see the house from the outside?" I asked.

"It is plastered on the outside with sands of invisibility which we find in great quantities along the beach," explained Han Du. "It is about our only protection against the Morgors. Every house in the city is thus protected, a little over five hundred of them."

So I had walked into a city of five hundred houses and seen only an expanse of open beach beside a restless sea. "But where are the people?" I asked. "Are they, too, invisible?"

"Those who are not away, hunting or fishing, are in their homes," explained O Ala. "We do not venture out any more than is necessary, lest Morgors be cruising around in their invisible ships and see us; thus discovering our city."

"If any of us should be thus caught out," said Han Du, "he must run away from the city as fast as he can, for if he entered a house, the Morgors would immediately know that there was a city here. It is the sacrifice that each of us is in honor bound to make for the safety of all, for he who runs is almost invariably caught and carried away, unless he chooses to fight and die."

"Tell me," I said to Han Du, "how in the world you found your house, when you could not see it or any other house?"

"You noticed the umpalla plants growing throughout the city?" he asked.

"I noticed some plants, but I saw no city."

They both laughed again. "We are so accustomed to it that it does not seem at all strange to us," said O Ala, "but I can understand that it might prove very confusing to a stranger. You see, each plant marks the location of a house. By long experience, each of us has learned the exact location of every house in the city in relation to every other house."

I remained for what may have been five or six days of earth time in the home of Han Du and O Ala. I met many of their friends, all of whom were gracious and helpful to me in every way that they could be. I was furnished with maps of considerable areas of the planet, parts of which, I was told, were still unexplored even by the Morgors. Of greatest value to me was the fact that Zanor appeared on one of the maps, which also showed that a vast ocean lay between me and the country in which I believed Dejah Thoris to be. How I was to cross this ocean neither I nor my new found friends could offer a suggestion, other than the rather mad scheme I envisioned of building a sail boat and trusting myself to the mad caprices of an unknown sea perhaps swarming with dangerous reptiles. But this I at last decided was the only hope I had for being again reunited with my princess.

There was a forest several miles along the coast from the city, where I might hope to find trees suitable for the construction of my craft. My friends tried their best to dissuade me; but when they found that I was determined to carry out my plan, they loaned me tools; and a dozen of them volunteered to accompany me to the forest and help me build my boat.

At last all was in readiness; and, accompanied by my volunteer helpers, I stepped from the house of Han Du to start the short march to the forest.

Scarcely were we in the open when one of my companions cried, "Morgors!" Whereupon the Savators scattered in all directions away from their city.

"Run, John Carter!" shouted Han Du, but I did not run.

A few yards distant, I saw the open doorway in the side of an invisible ship; and I saw six or seven Morgors emerge from it. Two rushed toward me; the others scattered in pursuit of the Savators. In that instant a new plan flashed across my mind. Hope, almost extinct, leaped to life again.

I whipped my sword from its scabbard and leaped forward to meet the first of the oncoming Morgors, thanking God that there were only two of them, as delay might easily wreck my hopes. There was no finesse in my attack: it was stark, brutal murder; but my conscience did not bother me as I drew my sword from the heart of the first Morgor and faced the second.

The second fellow gave me a little more trouble, as he had been forewarned by the fate of his companion; and, too, he presently recognized me. That made him doubly wary. He commenced to howl to the others, who were pursuing the Savators, to come back and help him, bellowing that here was the creature from Garobus who had led the slaughter at the graduating exercises. From the corner of an eye, I saw that two of them had heard and were returning. I must hurry!

The fellow now fought wholly on the defensive in order to gain time for the others to join him. I had no mind to permit this, and I pressed him hard, often laying myself wide open—a great swordsman could have killed me easily. At last I reached him with a mighty cut that almost severed his head from his body; then, with only a quick glance behind me to see how close the others were, I leaped toward the open doorway of the otherwise invisible ship, a Morgor close upon my heels.

With naked blade still in my hand, I sprang aboard and closed the door behind me; then I wheeled to face whatever of their fellows had been left aboard to guard the craft. The fools had left no one. I had the ship all to myself; and as I ran to the controls I heard the Morgors beating upon the door, angrily demanding that I open it. They must have taken me for a fool, too.

A moment later the ship rose into the air, and I was away upon one of the strangest adventures of my life—navigating an unknown planet in an invisible craft. And I had much to learn about navigation on Jupiter. By watching Vorion, I had learned how to start and stop a Morgor ship, how to gain or lose altitude, and how to cloak the ship in invisibility; but the instruments upon the panel before me were all entirely meaningless to me. The hieroglyphs of the Morgors were quite unintelligible. I had to work it all out for myself.

Opening all the ports, I had a clear field of vision. I could see the shore I had just left, and I knew the direction of the coastline.

Han Du had explained this to me. It ran due north and south at the point. The ocean lay to the west of it. I found an instrument which might easily have been a compass; when I altered the course of the ship, I saw that it was a compass. I now had my bearings as closely as it was possible for me to get them. I consulted my map and discovered that Zanor lay almost exactly southeast; so out across that vast expanse of ocean I turned the prow of my ship.

I was free. I had escaped the Morgors unharmed. In Zanor, Dejah Thoris was safe among friends. That I should soon be with her, I had no doubt. We had experienced another amazing adventure. Soon we should be reunited. I had not the slightest doubt of my ability to find Zanor. Perhaps it is because I am always so sure of myself that I so often accomplish the seemingly impossible.

How long I was in crossing that dismal ocean, I do not know. With Jupiter whirling on its axis nearly three times as fast as earth, and with no sun, moon, nor stars, I could not measure time.

I saw no ship upon that entire vast expanse of water, but I did see life—plenty of it. And I saw terrific storms that buffeted my craft, tossing it about like a feather. But that was nothing compared with what I saw below me as the storms at the height of their fury lashed the surface of the waters. I realized then how suicidal would have been my attempt to cross that terrible ocean in the frail craft that I had planned to build. I saw waves that hurled the mighty monsters of the deep as though they had been tiny minnows. No ship could have lived in such seas. I realized then why I saw no shipping on this great Jupiterian ocean.

But at last I sighted land ahead—and what land! Zan Dar had told me of the mighty mountains of Zanor rearing their forested heads twenty miles above the level of the sea, and it was such mountains that lay ahead of me. If I had reckoned accurately, this should be Zanor; and these breath-taking mountains assured me that I had not gone wrong.

I knew from Zan Dar's explanation, just where to search for the stamping grounds of his tribe—a wild mountain tribe of fighting men. They lay in a land of meadows and ravines on the east slope of the highest mountain and at an altitude of only about ten

miles, or about half way to the summit. Here the air is only slightly thinner than at sea level, as the cloud envelope retains the atmosphere of Jupiter as though it were held in a bag, permitting none of it to escape, while the rapid revolution of the planet tends to throw the atmosphere far up from the surface.

Most fortunate was I in coming upon the village of Zan Dar with little or no difficulty. Entirely invisible, I hovered above it, dropping down slowly.

There were people in plain view of me in the village as I dropped to within fifty feet of the ground. I stopped the ship and hung there; then I demagnetized the hull; and, as the ship became instantly visible, I leaped to the door and pushed it open; so that they could see that I was no Morgor. I shouted that I was a friend of Zan Dar.

They called to me to land, and I brought the ship slowly toward the ground. My lonely voyage was over. I had surmounted seemingly unsurmountable obstacles and I had reached my goal. Soon my incomparable Dejah Thoris would be again in my arms.

Ray Bradbury (1920-) is undoubtedly one of the best-known science-fiction and fantasy writers in the world today, having achieved critical success in his chosen field. Yet there was a time when his greatest objective was to sell to a magazine known as *Astounding Science-Fiction*, the field leader at the time, whose editor John W. Campbell steadfastly resisted Bradbury's literary blandishments. "Doodad" is unique for its first appearance in *Astounding Science-Fiction*, for October, 1943, marked the achievement of Bradbury's short-range objective.

Doodad

BY RAY BRADBURY

There was a crowd pressed together in front of the shop.

Crowell light-footed it into that crowd, his face long and sad. He cast a glance back over one lean shoulder, muttered to himself, and widened a lane through the people, quick.

A hundred yards back of him a low shining black beetle car hummed to the curb. A door clicked open, and the fat man with the gray-white face climbed heavily out, his expression one of silent, dead-pan hatred. Two bodyguards sat in the front seat.

Gyp Crowell wondered why he bothered running away. He was tired. Tired of trying to tell news over the audio every night and waking up every morning with gangsters at his heels just because he had mentioned the fact that "a certain fat man has been doing some dishonest finagling of Plastics, Inc."

Now, here was the fat man himself. That black beetle car had trailed Crowell from Pasadena all the way here.

Crowell lost himself in the crowd. He wondered vaguely why this crowd should be so curious about the shop. Certainly it was unusual, but so is everything else in southern California. He broke through the inner circle, looked up at the large scarlet

lettering over the blue glass windows, stared at it without a flicker of expression on his lean, perpetually sad face:

The sign on the shop said:

THINGUMABOBS DOODADS
WATCHAMACALLITS HINKIES
FORMODALDAFRAYS
HOOTINANNIES GADGETS
DOOHINGIES

Crowell took it in a dead calm. So this was the assignment his audio editor had given him to cover? Small-time screwpot stuff. Should be handled by a cub reporter. Nuts.

Then he thought about Steve Bishop, the fat man with the guns and the bodyguards. Any old port in a storm.

Crowell drew out a small transpara pad, scribbled down a few of those names—doohingies, hinkies—realizing that Bishop couldn't shoot him in this mob. Sure, maybe he had a right to shoot, after that threatened exposé and the blackmail Gyp was using against Bishop: the three-dimensional color images—

Crowell eased over to the translucent door of the shop, pushed it, and followed it in. He'd be safe in here, and doing his routine news assignment, too.

Brilliant light flushed the interior of the shop; pouring over a cold blue-and-white color scheme. Crowell felt chilly. Counting seventeen display cases, he investigated their contents at random, dead-gray eyes flicking passionlessly.

A very tiny man popped out from behind a blue glass case. He was so tiny and bald that Crowell had to repress a desire to pat him upon the head in fatherly fashion. That bald head was made for patting.

The tiny man's face was quite square and a peculiar yellowed tint, as if it had been aged much in the same manner as an old newspaper. "Yes?" he said.

Crowell said "Hello" quietly, taking his time. Now that he was in here he had to say something. So he said, "I want to buy a . . . a doohingey." His voice struck the same tiredly grieved note his face expressed.

"Fine, fine," said the tiny man. He dry-washed his hands. "I don't know why, but you're the first customer. The other people

just stand out there and laugh at my shop. Now—what year doohingey will you have? And what model?"

Crowell didn't know. He knew only surprise, but his face didn't show it. He'd begun his inquiry as if he knew all about it. Now was no time to confess ignorance. He pretended to muse over the problem and finally said, "I guess a 1973 model would do. Nothing too modern."

The tiny proprietor blinked. "Ah. Ah, I see you are a man of precise decision and choice. Step right this way." And he scuttled down an aisle, to pause before a large case in which reclined a—something.

It may have been a crankshaft, and yet it resembled a kitchen shelf with several earrings dangling along a metal edge which supported three horn-shaped attachments and six mechanisms Crowell couldn't recognize, and a thatch of tentacles resembling shoelaces poured out of the top.

Crowell made a throat noise, as if strangling on a button. Then he looked again. He decided that the tiny man was an utter idiot; but he kept this decision sealed in his gaunt brain.

As for the little proprietor, he was standing in a perfect ecstasy of happiness, eyes shining, lips parted in a warm smile, hands clasped over his chest, bending forward expectantly.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

Crowell nodded gravely. "Ye-ess. Ye-ess, I guess it's all right. I've seen better models, though."

"Better!" the little man exclaimed. He drew himself up. "Where?" he demanded. "Where!"

Crowell could have gotten flustered. He didn't. He simply took out his note pad, scribbled in it, kept his eyes on it and said cryptically, "You know where—" hoping this would satisfy the man.

It did.

"Oh!" gibbered the proprietor. "Then *you* know, too. How fine to deal with a connoisseur. How fine."

Crowell flicked a glance out the window, past the chuckling crowd. The fat man and his bodyguards and the black beetle car were gone. They had given up the chase for a while.

Crowell whipped his pad into his pocket, put his hand on the case with the doohingey in it. "I'm in a great hurry. Could I take it with me? I haven't money, but I'll make a down payment in trade. All right?"

"Perfectly all right."

"O. K." Crowell, with some misgiving, reached into his loose-fitting gray blouse and drew forth a metal apparatus, an old pipe cleaner that had seen better days. It was broken and bent into a weird shape. "Here you are. A hinkie. A 1944 model hinkie."

"Oh." The little man exhaled dismay. He stared with horror at Crowell. "Why, that's not a hinkie!"

"Uh . . . isn't it?"

"No, of course not."

"Of course not," repeated Crowell carefully.

"It's a whatchamacallit," said the little man, blinking. "And not a whole one either; just part of one. You like your little joke, don't you, Mr.—"

"Crowell Yeah. My little joke. Yeah. If you don't mind. Trade? I'm in a great hurry."

"Yes, yes. I'll load it on a skate platform so we can roll it out to your car. One moment."

The tiny man moved swiftly, procuring a small wheeled truck, onto which he transferred the doohingey. He helped Crowell roll it to the door. Crowell stopped him at the door. "Just a moment." He looked out. The black beetle car was nowhere in sight. "Good. O. K."

The little man's voice was soft with caution. "Just remember, Mr. Crowell—please don't go around killing people with this doohingey. Be . . . be selective Yes, that's it, be selective and discerning. Remember, Mr. Crowell?"

Crowell swallowed a number-ten-size lump in his throat.

"I'll remember," he said, and hurriedly finished the deal.

He took the low-level avenue tube out of the Wilshire district heading for his home in Brentwood. Nobody trailed him. He was sure of that. He didn't know what Bishop's plans for the next few hours might be. He didn't know. He didn't care. He was in the middle of another pall of melancholy. It was a lousy, screwball world, in which everybody had to be dishonest to get along. That fat slug of a Bishop, he—

The contraption on the seat beside him drew his attention. He looked at it with a little shaking dry laugh coming out of his mouth.

"So you're a doohingey?" he said. "Huh, everybody to their

own special racket. Bishop and his plastics, me and my blackmail, and that little dope with the doodads and hingdooies. At that, I think the little guy is the smartest."

He turned his white beetle car off the sub-branch tube and went down a side tunnel that came up under his block. Garaging his car and scanning the surrounding park carefully, he lugged the doohingey upstairs, opened the dial door, went in, closed the door, and set the doohingey on the table. He poured himself a few fingers of brandy.

A moment later someone rapped softly, quietly and very slowly on the door. No use putting it off. Crowell answered and opened it.

"Hello, Crowell."

The fat man at the door had a face like cooked pork, cold and flabby. His eyelids drooped over red-veined, green-irised eyes. He had a cigar in his mouth that moved with his words.

"Glad you're home, Crowell. Been waiting to see you."

Crowell backed up and the fat man came in. The fat man sat down, put his hands over his round belly and said, "Well?"

Crowell swallowed. "I haven't got the images here, Bishop."

The fat man didn't say anything. He unlocked his two hands slowly, reached into his pocket as if to get a handkerchief and brought out a small paralysis gun instead. Cold blue steel.

"Change your mind, Crowell?"

Crowell's sad white face looked all sadder with cold sweat on it. His throat muscles lengthened. He tried to get his brain working, but it was locked in cement, hard and hot and furiously, suddenly afraid. It didn't show through to the outside. He saw Bishop, the gun, the room joggling up and down in his vision.

And then he saw the . . . the doohingey.

Bishop shifted the safety stud on the gun. "Where'll you have it? Head or chest. They say you die quicker if they paralyze your brain first. I prefer touching the heart with it, myself. Well?"

"Wait a moment," said Crowell carelessly. He made himself draw back a slow pace. He sat down, all the while realizing that Bishop's finger was quavering on a hair trigger. "You're not going to kill me; you're going to thank me for letting you in on the greatest invention of our time."

Bishop's huge face didn't change a line or muscle. His cigar wagged. "Snap it, Crowell. I haven't time for greasing the tongue."

"Plenty of time," said Crowell, calmly. "I've got a perfect murder weapon for you. Believe it or not, I have. Take a look at that machine sitting on the table."

The gun remained firm, blue steel. Bishop's eyes slide to one side of his face, jerked back. "So what?" he said.

"So if you listen to me you can be the biggest plastics boss to ever hit the Pacific coast. You want that, don't you?"

Bishop's eyes widened a microscopic trifle, narrowed. "Are you stalling me for time?"

"Look, Bishop, I know when I'm cooked. That's why I'm cutting you in on . . . on that damned doohingey of mine."

"On that *what?*"

"I just call it a doohingey. Haven't got a name for it yet." Crowell's brain was rotating, throwing ideas off one after another with the heated centrifuge of desperation. One idea stuck. *Keep Bishop stalled until you have a chance to get his gun. Bluff him. Bluff him like hell. Now—*

Crowell cleared his throat. "It . . . it's a radio killer," he lied. "All I have to do is give it directions and it'll kill anyone. No mess. No nothing. No clues. Perfect crime, Bishop. Interested?"

Bishop shook his head. "You been drinking. It's getting late—"

"Hold on," said Crowell, suddenly tensing forward, his gray eyes bright. "Don't move, Bishop. I've got you covered. That machine is trained on you. Before you came in I set it to a certain frequency. One squeak out of you and it'll nail you!"

Bishop's cigar fell to the floor. The gun hand wavered.

Crowell saw his chance. His lean muscles bunched into one tight, compact coil. His mouth opened, words darted out. "Watch it, Bishop! All right, machine, do your stuff! Kill Bishop!"

And with that, Crowell catapulted himself. He felt himself leave the chair, saw the startled look on Bishop's face. The misdirection had worked. The gun went off. The silver beam sizzled past Crowell's ear and splashed on the wall. Crowell snatched with both hands to clutch Bishop, get the gun.

But Crowell never got to Bishop.

Bishop was dead.

The doohingey got there first.

Crowell had a drink. Then he had another. His stomach was floating in the stuff. But he still couldn't forget how Bishop looked—dead.

Bishop had died—how? He had been sort of stabbed, shot, strangled, electrocuted—he'd been . . . uh . . . you know what I mean? He was sort of—dead. Yeah, that's it. Dead.

Crowell had another drink just on account of that. He looked at the bedroom wall and decided that sometime in the next minutes those bodyguards would be busting in up here, looking for their boss. But Crowell couldn't stand the thought of going in the living room to see where Bishop lay on the floor next to the—doohingey. He shivered.

After two more drinks that didn't even touch his mind, he got around to packing some of his clothes. He didn't know where he was going, but he was going. He was about to leave the house when the audio made a gonging noise.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Crowell?"

"Talking."

"This is the little man at the Doodads Shop."

"Oh, yeah. Hello."

"Would you mind dropping by the shop again? And please bring the doohingey with you, yes? I fear that I've short-changed you on that model. I have another one here that is much better."

Crowell's voice got caught in his throat. "This one seems to be working fine."

He cut the contact and held onto his brains with both hands so they couldn't slide down into his shoes. He hadn't planned on killing anybody. He didn't like the idea. And that put him on the spot even more than before. Those gunmen bodyguards wouldn't stop now until—

His jaw stiffened. Let them come after him. He wasn't running away this time. He was staying in town, doing his news work as if nothing had happened. He was tired of the whole business. He didn't care if he got shot now or not. He'd even laugh with joy when they were shooting.

No use making unnecessary trouble, though. He'd carry the fat man's—body—down to the garage, put it in the back seat of the white beetle, and drive past some lonely spot, bury it, and hold the bodyguards off by telling them he had kidnaped Bishop. Yeah, that was a good idea. Clever man this Crowell.

"All right—" He tried to lift Bishop's tremendous body. He couldn't. He finally got the body downstairs to the beetle, though—the doohingey did it.

Crowell stayed upstairs until the job was done. He didn't like to watch the doohingey at work with a dead body.

"Ah, Mr. Crowell." The little proprietor opened the gleaming glass door. There was still a small crowd outside. "I see you brought the doohingey. Good."

Crowell set the contraption on the counter, thinking quickly to himself. Well. Now maybe explanations would be made. He'd have to be subtle; no blunt questions. He'd—

"Look, Mr. Whosis, I didn't tell you, but I'm an audio reporter. I'd like to broadcast a story about you and your shop for the Audio-News. But I'd like it in your own words."

"You know as much about the thingumabobs as I do," replied the little man.

"Do I?"

"That's the impression you gave me—"

"Oh, sure. Sure I do. But it's always better when we quote somebody. See?"

"Your logic is nebulous, but I shall co-operate. Your listeners will probably want to know all about my Doodad Shop, eh? Well, it took thousands of years of traveling to make it grow."

"Miles," corrected Crowell.

"Years," stated the little man.

"Naturally," said Crowell.

"You might call my shop the energy result of misconstrued improper semantics. These instruments might well be labeled 'Inventions That Do Everything Instead Of Something.'"

"Oh, of course," said Crowell, blankly.

"Now, when a man shows another man a particular part of a beetle car's automotive controls and he can't recall the proper label for that part, what does he do?"

Crowell saw the light. "He calls it a doodad or a hingey or a whatchamacallit. Right?"

"Correct. And if a woman, talking to another woman about her washing machine or egg beater or knitting or crocheting and *she* had a psychological blocking, forgets the proper semantic label, what does *she* say?"

"She says 'Take this hungamabob and trinket the turndel with it. You grasp the dipsy and throw it over the flimsy,'" said Crowell, like a school kid suddenly understanding mathematics.

"Correct!" cried the little man. "All right, then. Therefore we have the birth of incorrect semantic labels that can be used to describe anything from a hen's nest to a motor-beetle crankcase. A doohingey can be the name of a scrub mop or a toupee. It's a term used freely by everybody in a certain culture. A doohingey isn't just one thing. It's a thousand things.

"Well, now, what I have done is form into energy the combined total of all things a doohingey has ever referred to. I have entered the minds of innumerable civilized humans, extracted their opinion of what *they* call a doohingey, what *they* call a thingum, and created from raw atomic energy a physical contraption of those mentally incorrect labelings. In other words, my inventions are three-dimensional representations of a semantic idea. Since the minds of people make a doohingey anything from a carpet sweeper to a number-nine-size nut-and-bolt, *my* inventions follow the same pattern. The doohingey you carried home today could do almost anything you would want it to do. Many of the inventions have robotlike functions, due to the fact that the abilities of movement, thought and mechanical versatility were included in them."

"They can do everything?"

"Well, not everything. Most of the inventions have about sixty different processes, all alien, all mixed, all shapes, sizes, molded into them. Each one of my creations has a different set of services. Some are big. Some small. Some of the big ones have many, many services. The small ones have only one or two simple functions. Not two are alike. Think of the space and time and money you save by buying a doohingey!"

"Yeah," said Crowell. He thought about Bishop's body. "Your doohingey is certainly versatile, all right."

"That reminds me," said the little man. "About that 1944 model hinkie you sold me in trade. Where did you get it?"

"Get it? You mean that pipe cle—I mean, the hinkie? I— Oh, well, I—"

"You don't have to be secretive. We share trade secrets, you know. Did you make it yourself?"

"I . . . I bought it and worked on it. The . . . the power of thought, you know."

"Then you *know* the secret? How astonishing! I thought I was the only one who knew about the transmission of thought into energy forms. Brilliant man. Did you study in Rruhre?"

"No. I was always sorry I never got there. Never had the opportunity. I had to struggle along alone. Look, I'd like to turn this doohingey in for another apparatus. I don't like it."

"You don't like it? Why not?"

"Oh I just don't. Too cumbersome. Give me something simple every time."

Yeah, simple, he thought, something you can see how it works.

"What kind of machine do you want this time, Mr. Crowell?"

"Give me a . . . gadget."

"What year gadget?"

"Does that make a great deal of difference, what year?"

"Oh, you're joking again, aren't you?"

Crowell swallowed. "I'm joking."

"You know, of course, that in each year for thousands of years that the type of gadget and the name for a gadget would be different. A thingooey of the year 1965 would be an oddsblodkins in 1492. Or a ettubrutus in the days of Caesar."

"Are *you* joking?" asked Crowell. "No. Never mind. Give me my gadget and I'll go home."

That word "home" startled Crowell. It wouldn't be wise to go there just yet. Hide out for a while until he could send a message to the bodyguard saying that he was holding Bishop prisoner. Yes. That was it. That was safest.

In the meantime he was curious about this shop, but not curious enough to have horrible contraptions like that doohingey near him. The little man was talking:

"I've a whole case full of thingumabobs from all historical periods I'll give you," he was saying. "I'm so overstocked with stuff, and nobody but you takes me seriously so far. I haven't made one sale today. It's quite saddening."

Crowell felt sorry for the man, but—"Tell you what. I've got an empty storage room in my house. Send the stuff around in a few days and I'll look it over and take what I like."

"Can't you take some of it with you now?" pleaded the little man.

"I don't think I can—"

"Oh, it's small. Very small stuff. Really. Here. I'll show you. A few little boxes of trinkets and knacknacks Here. Here they are." He bent behind a counter, brought out six boxes, enough to load Crowell's arms up to the chin.

Crowell opened one box. "Sure. I'll take these. Nothing but

soup strainers, paring knives, lemon juicers, doorknobs and old meerschau pipes from Holland. Sure, I'll take *these*." They looked safe. They were small, simple. Nothing wrong with them.

"Oh, thank you. Thank you. Put these in the back of your beetle, gratis. I'm glad to clean them out of the store. I've done so much energy creating in the last few years or so I'll be relieved to get rid of them. Sick and tired of looking at them. There you go."

Crowell, his arms full, staggered out to his white beetle and tossed the stuff in the back seat. He waved to the little man, said he'd see him again in a few days, and drove off.

The hour spent in the shop, the gibbering joy of the little man, the bright lights, had made him forget, for the time, about Bishop's bodyguards and Bishop himself.

The beetle car hummed under him. He headed downtown toward the Audio studios, trying to decide what was wisest to do. He reached back, curiously, and pulled out one of the little gadgets. It was nothing more nor less than a pipe. Seeing it, made him hungry for a smoke, so he took the pipe, filled it with makings from his blouse pouch, and lit it, experimentally, carefully. He puffed smoke. Fine. A good pipe.

He was busy enjoying the pipe when he noticed something in the rear-view mirror. He was being followed by two black beetle cars. Not mistaking those low ebony high-powered crawlers.

He cursed silently and put on speed. The beetles were catching up with him, gaining speed every instant. There were two thugs in one of them, and two in the other.

"I'll stop and tell them that I'm holding their boss as hostage," said Crowell to himself.

There were guns gleaming in the hands of the thugs in the black cars.

Crowell realized that they would shoot first and talk later. He hadn't planned that. He had planned on hiding away and calling them and giving them his ultimatum. But—*this!* They were coming after him. He wouldn't have a chance to explain before they'd shoot him down.

He increased the speed with his foot. Sweat came out to play on his forehead. What a mess. He was beginning to wish he

hadn't returned the doohingey to the shop. He could use it now, just as he had inadvertently used it on Bishop.

Doohingey! Gadgets!

Crowell cried out in relief. Maybe—

He reached into the back seat and scrabbled wildly among the litter of gadgets. None of them looked like they could do anything, but he'd try, anyhow.

"O. K., you thingums, do your stuff! Protect me, damn you!"

There was a rattling crisp noise and something metallic thumped past Crowell's ears, winged outside on transparent glass wings back in the direction of the pursuing enemy car and hit it head on.

There was an explosion of green fire and gray smoke.

The fraltamoret had done its work. It was a combination of a little boy's automatic airplane and an explosive projectile.

Crowell pressed the floor plate and shot his beetle ahead again. The second car was still pursuing. They wouldn't give up.

"Get them!" cried Crowell. "Get them, too! Get them any way you can!" He dumped two boxes of trinkets out the window. Several of them took flight. The others bounced harmlessly on the cement.

Two missiles glittered in the air. They looked like old-fashioned pinking shears, sharp and bright, and an antigravity main-mechanistic drive attached. They sang along the boulevard until they got to the remaining black beetle car.

They went in through the open windows gleaming.

The black beetle car lost its control and went off the avenue, turning over and over, smashing, and bursting into a sudden savage fire.

Crowell slumped in his seat. He let the beetle slow down and pull around a corner and over to the curb, stopping. He was breathing fast. His heart crashed.

He could go home now, if he wanted to. There would be no one else waiting for him at home, waiting to ambush him, stop him, question him, threaten him.

He could go home now. Funny, but he didn't feel relieved or happy. He just felt dark, unhappy, ill at ease. The world was a lousy place to live in. He had a bitter taste in his mouth.

He drove home. Well, maybe things would be better. Maybe.

He took the remaining boxes of trinkets and got out of the beetle and took the vac-elevator upstairs. He opened the door and laid the boxes down and sorted through them.

He still had that pipe in his mouth, after all the excitement. He had picked it up automatically and put it back in his mouth. He was nervous. Needed another smoke now to quiet his mind.

He put fresh tobacco in his new pipe and puffed it into life. That little man was a screw for giving him all this stuff. Dangerous to have this sort of knowledge lying around in the world. All kinds of wrong people might get hold of it, use it.

He laughed and puffed at his pipe.

From now on, he'd play big shot. With the help of the little man and the shop, he'd make those big Plastics officials jump, pay him money, obey his every thought. Damn them.

It sounded like a lot of trouble, though. He sat down and scowled and brooded about it and his thoughts got dark, like they had been for so many years. Pessimistic.

What was the use of trying to do anything in this world? Why did he bother to go on living? He got so tired.

Sometimes, like tonight and so many nights in the long years, he felt that it might be a good idea if those gunmen caught up with him and filled him full of paralysis. Sometimes, if he had a gun in his own fingers, *he'd blast his brains out.*

There was a sharp explosion. Crowell stood up suddenly. He stiffened and fell down on his knees.

He'd forgotten about the pipe in his mouth—forgotten it was a thingumabob gadget.

It took an unpleasantly fatal way of reminding him.

Jack Williamson (1908-) teaches college English and has just completed work on a major essay concerning H. G. Wells's reputation for belief in the inevitability of progress. "The Cosmic Express" was first published in *Amazing Stories* for November, 1930, as an early and ingenious spoof of the science fiction of the thirties. It treated the "romances" of standard adventure fare to a realistic and graphic description, and in the process offered highly advanced scientific concepts as well as the prophecy that Westerns would become the rage on T.V. Mr. Williamson's work has appeared continuously in science-fiction magazines for 35 years.

The Cosmic Express

BY JACK WILLIAMSON

Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding tumbled out of the rumpled bed-clothing, a striking slender figure in purple-striped pajamas. He smiled fondly across to the other of the twin beds, where Nada, his pretty bride, lay quiet beneath light silk covers. With a groan, he stood up and began a series of fantastic bending exercises. But after a few half-hearted movements, he gave it up, and walked through an open door into a small bright room, its walls covered with bookcases and also with scientific appliances that would have been strange to the man of four or five centuries before, when the Age of Aviation was beginning.

Yawning, Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding stood before the great open window, staring out. Below him was a wide, park-like space, green with emerald lawns, and bright with flowering plants. Two hundred yards across it rose an immense pyramidal building—an artistic structure, gleaming with white marble and bright metal, striped with the verdure of terraced roof-gardens, its slender peak rising to help support the gray, steel-ribbed glass roof above. Beyond, the park stretched away in illimitable vistas, broken with the graceful columned buildings that held up the great glass roof.

Above the glass, over this New York of 2432 A. D., a freezing

blizzard was sweeping. But small concern was that to the lightly clad man at the window, who was inhaling deeply the fragrant air from the plants below—air kept, winter and summer, exactly at 20° C.

With another yawn, Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding turned back to the room, which was bright with the rich golden light that poured in from the suspended globes of the cold ato-light that illuminated the snow-covered city. With a distasteful grimace, he seated himself before a broad, paper-littered desk, sat a few minutes leaning back, with his hands clasped behind his head. At last he straightened reluctantly, slid a small typewriter out of its drawer, and began pecking at it impatiently.

For Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding was an author. There was a whole shelf of his books on the wall, in bright jackets, red and blue and green, that brought a thrill of pleasure to the young novelist's heart when he looked up from his clattering machine.

He wrote "thrilling action romances," as his enthusiastic publishers and television directors said, "of ages past, when men were men. Red-blooded heroes responding vigorously to the stirring passions of primordial life!"

He was impartial as to the source of his thrills—provided they were distant enough from modern civilization. His hero was likely to be an ape-man roaring through the jungle, with a bloody rock in one hand and a beautiful girl in the other. Or a cowboy, "hard-riding, hard-shooting," the vanishing hero of the ancient ranches. Or a man marooned with a lovely woman on a desert South Sea island. His heroes were invariably strong, fearless, resourceful fellows, who could handle a club on equal terms with a cave-man, or call science to aid them in defending a beautiful mate from the terrors of a desolate wilderness.

And a hundred million read Eric's novels, and watched the dramatization of them on the television screens. They thrilled at the simple, romantic lives his heroes led, paid him handsome royalties, and subconsciously shared his opinion that civilization had taken all the best from the life of man.

Eric had settled down to the artistic satisfaction of describing the sensuous delight of his hero in the roasted marrow-bones of a dead mammoth, when the pretty woman in the other room

stirred, and presently came tripping into the study, gay and vivacious, and—as her husband of a few months most justly thought—altogether beautiful in a bright silk dressing gown.

Recklessly, he slammed the machine back into its place, and resolved to forget that his next "red-blooded action thriller" was due in the publisher's office at the end of the month. He sprang up to kiss his wife, held her embraced for a long happy moment. And then they went hand in hand, to the side of the room and punched a series of buttons on a panel—a simple way of ordering breakfast sent up the automatic shaft from the kitchens below.

Nada Stokes-Harding was also an author. She wrote poems—"back to nature stuff"—simple lyrics of the sea, of sunsets, of bird songs, of bright flowers and warm winds, of thrilling communion with Nature, and growing things. Men read her poems and called her a genius. Even though the whole world had grown up into a city, the birds were extinct, there were no wild flowers, and no one had time to bother about sunsets.

"Eric, darling," she said, "isn't it terrible to be cooped up here in this little flat, away from the things we both love?"

"Yes, dear. Civilization has ruined the world. If we could only have lived a thousand years ago, when life was simple and natural, when men hunted and killed their meat, instead of drinking synthetic stuff, when men still had the joys of conflict, instead of living under glass, like hot-house flowers."

"If we could only go somewhere—"

"There isn't anywhere to go. I write about the West, Africa, South Sea Islands. But they were all filled up two hundred years ago. Pleasure resorts, sanatoriums, cities, factories."

"If only we lived on Venus! I was listening to a lecture on the television, last night. The speaker said that the Planet Venus is younger than the Earth, that it has not cooled so much. It has a thick, cloudy atmosphere, and low, rainy forests. There's simple, elemental life there—like Earth had before civilization ruined it."

"Yes, Kinsley, with his new infra-red ray telescope, that penetrates the cloud layers of the planet, proved that Venus rotates in about the same period as Earth; and it must be much like Earth was a million years ago."

"Eric, I wonder if we could go there! It would be so thrilling to

begin life like the characters in your stories, to get away from this hateful civilization, and live natural lives. Maybe a rocket—"

The young author's eyes were glowing. He skipped across the floor, seized Nada, kissed her ecstatically. "Splendid! Think of hunting in the virgin forest, and bringing the game home to you! But I'm afraid there is no way.—Wait! The Cosmic Express."

"The Cosmic Express?"

"A new invention. Just perfected a few weeks ago, I understand. By Ludwig Von der Valls, the German physicist."

"I've quit bothering about science. It has ruined nature, filled the world with silly, artificial people, doing silly, artificial things."

"But this is quite remarkable, dear. A new way to travel—by ether!"

"By ether!"

"Yes. You know of course that energy and matter are interchangeable terms; both are simply etheric vibration, of different sorts."

"Of course. That's elementary." She smiled proudly. "I can give you examples, even of the change. The disintegration of the radium atom, making helium and lead and *energy*. And Millikan's old proof that his Cosmic Ray is generated when particles of electricity are united to form an atom."

"Fine! I thought you said you weren't a scientist." He glowed with pride. "But the method, in the new Cosmic Express, is simply to convert the matter to be carried into power, send it out as a radiant beam and focus the beam to convert it back into atoms at the destination."

"But the amount of energy must be terrific—"

"It is. You know short waves carry more energy than long ones. The Express Ray is an electromagnetic vibration of frequency far higher than that of even the Cosmic ray, and correspondingly more powerful and more penetrating."

The girl frowned, running slim fingers through golden-brown hair. "But I don't see how they get any recognizable object, not even how they get the radiation turned back into matter."

"The beam is focused, just like the light that passes through a camera lens. The photographic lens, using light rays, picks up a picture and reproduces it again on the plate—just the same as the Ex-Press Ray picks up an object and sets it down on the other side of the world."

"An analogy from television might help. You know that by means of the scanning disc, the picture is transformed into mere rapid fluctuations in the brightness of a beam of light. In a parallel manner, the focal plane of the Express Ray moves slowly through the object, progressively, dissolving layers of the thickness of a single atom, which are accurately reproduced at the other focus of the instrument—which might be in Venus!

"But the analogy of the lens is the better of the two. For no receiving instrument is required, as in television. The object is built up of an infinite series of plane layers, at the focus of the ray, no matter where that may be. Such a thing would be impossible with radio apparatus because even with the best beam transmission, all but a tiny fraction of the power is lost, and power is required to rebuild the atoms. Do you understand, dear?"

"Not altogether. But I should worry! Here comes breakfast. Let me butter your toast."

A bell had rung at the shaft. She ran to it, and returned with a great silver tray, laden with dainty dishes, which she set on a little side table. They sat down opposite each other, and ate, getting as much satisfaction from contemplation of each other's faces as from the excellent food. When they had finished, she carried the tray to the shaft, slid it in a slot, and touched a button—thus disposing of the culinary cares of the morning.

She ran back to Eric, who was once more staring distastefully at his typewriter.

"Oh, darling! I'm thrilled to death about the Cosmic Express! If we could go to Venus, to a new life on a new world, and get away from all this hateful conventional society—"

"We can go to their office—it's only five minutes. The chap that operates the machine for the company is a pal of mine. He's not supposed to take passengers except between the offices they have scattered about the world. But I know his weak point—"

Eric laughed, fumbled with a hidden spring under his desk. A small polished object, gleaming silvery, slid down into his hand.

"Old friendship, *plus* this, would make him—like spinach."

Five minutes later Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding and his pretty wife were in street clothes, light silk tunics of loose, flowing lines—little clothing being required in the artificially warmed city. They

entered an elevator and dropped thirty stories to the ground floor of the great building.

There they entered a cylindrical car, with rows of seats down the sides. Not greatly different from an ancient subway car, except that it was air-tight, and was hurled by magnetic attraction and repulsion through a tube exhausted of air, at a speed that would have made an old subway rider gasp with amazement.

In five more minutes their car had whipped up to the base of another building, in the business section, where there was no room for parks between the mighty structures that held the unbroken glass roofs two hundred stories above the concrete pavement.

An elevator brought them up a hundred and fifty stories. Eric led Nada down a long, carpeted corridor to a wide glass door, which bore the words:

COSMIC EXPRESS

stenciled in gold capitals across it.

As they approached, a lean man, carrying a black bag, darted out of an elevator shaft opposite the door, ran across the corridor, and entered. They pushed in after him.

They were in a little room, cut in two by a high brass grill. In front of it was a long bench against the wall, that reminded one of the waiting room in an old railroad depot. In the grill was a little window, with a lazy, brown-eyed youth leaning on the shelf behind it. Beyond him was a great, glittering piece of mechanism, half hidden by the brass. A little door gave access to the machine from the space before the grill.

The thin man in black, whom Eric now recognized as a prominent French heart-specialist, was dancing before the window, waving his bag frantically, raving at the sleepy boy.

"Queek! I have tell you zee truth! I have zee most urgent necessity to go queekly. A patient I have in Paree, zat ees in zee most crittical condition!"

"Hold your horses just a minute, Mister. We got a client in the machine now. Russian diplomat from Moscow to Rio de Janeiro. . . . Two hundred seventy dollars and eighty cents, please. . . . Your turn next. Remember this is just an experimental service. Regular installations all over the world in a year. . . . Ready now. Come on in."

The youth took the money, pressed a button. The door sprang open in the grill, and the frantic physician leaped through it.

"Lie down on the crystal, face up," the young man ordered. "Hands at your sides, don't breathe. Ready!"

He manipulated his dials and switches, and pressed another button.

"Why, hello, Eric, old man!" he cried. "That's the lady you were telling me about? Congratulations!" A bell jangled before him on the panel. "Just a minute. I've got a call."

He punched the board again. Little bulbs lit and glowed for a second. The youth turned toward the half-hidden machine, spoke courteously.

"All right, madam. Walk out. Hope you found the transit pleasant."

"But my Violet! My precious Violet!" a shrill female voice came from the machine. "Sir, what have you done with my darling Violet?"

"I'm sure I don't know, madam. You lost it off your hat?"

"None of your impertinence, sir! I want my dog."

"Ah, a dog. Must have jumped off the crystal. You can have him sent on for three hundred and—"

"Young man, if any harm comes to my Violet—I'll—I'll—I'll appeal to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!"

"Very good, madam. We appreciate your patronage."

The door flew open again. A very fat woman, puffing angrily, face highly colored, clothing shimmering with artificial gems, waddled pompously out of the door through which the frantic French doctor had so recently vanished. She rolled heavily across the room, and out into the corridor. Shrill words floated back:

"I'm going to see my lawyer! My precious Violet—"

The sallow youth winked. "And now what can I do for you, Eric?"

"We want to go to Venus, if that ray of yours can put us there."

"To Venus? Impossible. My orders are to use the Express merely between the sixteen designated stations, at New York, San Francisco, Tokyo, London, Paris—"

"See here, Charley," with a cautious glance toward the door, Eric held up the silver flask. "For old time's sake, and for this—"

The boy seemed dazed at sight of the bright flask. Then, with a

single swift motion, he snatched it out of Eric's hand, and bent to conceal it below his instrument panel.

"Sure, old boy. I'd send you to heaven for that, if you'd give me the micrometer readings to set the ray with. But I tell you, this is dangerous. I've got a sort of television attachment, for focusing the ray. I can turn that on Venus—I've been amusing myself, watching the life there, already. Terrible place. Savage. I can pick a place on high land to set you down. But I can't be responsible for what happens afterward."

"Simple, primitive life is what we're looking for. And now what do I owe you—"

"Oh, that's all right. Between friends. Provided that stuff's genuine! Walk in and lie down on the crystal block. Hands at your sides. Don't move."

The little door had swung open again, and Eric led Nada through. They stepped into a little cell, completely surrounded with mirrors and vast prisms and lenses and electron tubes. In the center was a slab of transparent crystal, eight feet square and two inches thick, with an intricate mass of machinery below it.

Eric helped Nada to a place on the crystal, lay down at her side.

"I think the Express Ray is focused just at the surface of the crystal, from below," he said. "It dissolves our substance, to be transmitted by the beam. It would look as if we were melting into the crystal."

"Ready," called the youth. "Think I've got it for you. Sort of a high island in the jungle. Nothing bad in sight now. But, I say—how're you coming back? I haven't got time to watch you."

"Go ahead. We aren't coming back."

"Geel! What is it? Elopement? I thought you were married already. Or is it business difficulties? The Bears did make an awful raid last night. But you better let me set you down in Hong Kong."

A bell jangled. "So long," the youth called.

Nada and Eric felt themselves enveloped in fire. Sheets of white flame seemed to lap up about them from the crystal block. Suddenly there was a sharp tingling sensation where they touched the polished surface. Then blackness, blankness.

The next thing they knew, the fires were gone from about them. They were lying in something extremely soft and fluid; and

warm rain was beating in their faces. Eric sat up, found himself in a mud-puddle. Beside him was Nada, opening her eyes and struggling up, her bright garments stained with black mud.

All about rose a thick jungle, dark and gloomy—and very wet. Palm-like, the gigantic trees were, or fern-like, flinging clouds of feathery green foliage high against a somber sky of unbroken gloom.

They stood up, triumphant.

"At last!" Nada cried. "We're free! Free of that hateful old civilization! We're back to Nature!"

"Yes, we're on our feet now, not parasites on the machines."

"It's wonderful to have a fine, strong man like you to trust in, Eric. You're just like one of the heroes in your books!"

"You're the perfect companion, Nada. . . . But now we must be practical. We must build a fire, find weapons, set up a shelter of some kind. I guess it will be night, pretty soon. And Charley said something about savage animals he had seen in the television.

"We'll find a nice dry cave, and have a fire in front of the door. And skins of animals to sleep on. And pottery vessels to cook in. And you will find seeds and grown grain."

"But first we must find a flint-bed. We need flint for tools, and to strike sparks to make a fire with. We will probably come across a chunk of virgin copper, too—it's found native."

Presently they set off through the jungle. The mud seemed to be very abundant, and of a most sticky consistency. They sank into it ankle deep at every step, and vast masses of it clung to their feet. A mile they struggled on, without finding where a provident nature had left them even a single fragment of quartz, to say nothing of a mass of pure copper.

"A darned shame," Eric grumbled, "to come forty million miles, and meet such a reception as this!"

Nada stopped. "Eric," she said, "I'm tired. And I don't believe there's any rock here, anyway. You'll have to use wooden tools, sharpened in the fire."

"Probably you're right. This soil seemed to be of alluvial origin. Shouldn't be surprised if the native rock is some hundreds of feet underground. Your idea is better."

"You can make a fire by rubbing sticks together, can't you?"

"It can be done, I'm sure. I've never tried it, myself. We need some dry sticks, first."

They resumed the weary march, with a good fraction of the new planet adhering to their feet. Rain was still falling from the dark heavens in a steady, warm downpour. Dry wood seemed scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth.

"You didn't bring any matches, dear?"

"Matches! Of course not! We're going back to Nature."

"I hope we get a fire pretty soon."

"If dry wood were gold dust, we couldn't buy a hot dog."

"Eric, that reminds me that I'm hungry."

He confessed to a few pangs of his own. They turned their attention to looking for banana trees, and coconut palms, but they did not seem to abound in the Venerian jungle. Even small animals that might have been slain with a broken branch had contrary ideas about the matter.

At last, from sheer weariness, they stopped, and gathered branches to make a sloping shelter by a vast fallen tree-trunk.

"This will keep out the rain—maybe—" Eric said hopefully. "And tomorrow, when it has quit raining—I'm sure we'll do better."

They crept in, as gloomy night fell without. They lay in each other's arms, the body warmth oddly comforting. Nada cried a little.

"Buck up," Eric advised her. "We're back to Nature—where we've always wanted to be."

With the darkness, the temperature fell somewhat, and a high wind rose, whipping cold rain into the little shelter, and threatening to demolish it. Swarms of mosquito-like insects, seemingly not inconvenienced in the least by the inclement elements, swarmed about them in clouds.

Then came a sound from the dismal stormy night, a hoarse, bellowing roar, raucous, terrifying.

Nada clung against Eric. "What is it, dear?" she chattered.

"Must be a reptile. Dinosaur, or something of the sort. This world seems to be in about the same state as the earth when they flourished there. . . . But maybe it won't find us."

The roar was repeated, nearer. The earth trembled beneath a mighty tread.

"Eric," a thin voice trembled. "Don't you think—it might have been better— You know the old life was not so bad, after all."

"I was just thinking of our rooms, nice and warm and bright, with hot foods coming up the shaft whenever we pushed the button, and the gay crowds in the park, and my old typewriter."

"Eric?" she called softly.

"Yes, dear."

"Don't you wish—we had known better?"

"I do." If he winced at the "we" the girl did not notice.

The roaring outside was closer. And suddenly it was answered by another raucous bellow, at considerable distance, that echoed strangely through the forest. The tearful sounds were repeated, alternately. And always the more distant seemed nearer, until the two sounds were together.

And then an infernal din broke out in the darkness. Bellows. Screams. Deafening shrieks. Mighty splashes, as if struggling Titans had upset oceans. Thunderous crashes, as if they were demolishing forests.

Eric and Nada clung to each other, in doubt whether to stay or to fly through the storm. Gradually the sound of the conflict came nearer, until the earth shook beneath them, and they were afraid to move.

Suddenly the great fallen tree against which they had erected the flimsy shelter was rolled back, evidently by a chance blow from the invisible monsters. The pitiful roof collapsed on the bedraggled humans. Nada burst into tears.

"Oh, if only—if only—"

Suddenly flame lapped up about them, the same white fire they had seen as they lay on the crystal block. Dizziness, insensibility overcame them. A few moments later, they were lying on the transparent table in the Cosmic Express office, with all those great mirrors and prisms and lenses about them.

A bustling, red-faced official appeared through the door in the grill, fairly bubbling apologies.

"So sorry—an accident—inconceivable. I can't see how he got it! We got you back as soon as we could find a focus. I sincerely hope you haven't been injured."

"Why—what—what—"

"Why I happened in, found our operator drunk. I've no idea where he got the stuff. He muttered something about Venus. I consulted the auto-register, and found two more passengers regis-

tered here than had been recorded at our other stations. I looked up the duplicate beam coordinates, and found that it had been set on Venus. I got men on the television at once, and we happened to find you.

"I can't imagine how it happened. I've had the fellow locked up, and the 'dry-laws' are on the job. I hope you won't hold us for excessive damages."

"No, I ask nothing except that you don't press charges against the boy. I don't want him to suffer for it in any way. My wife and I will be perfectly satisfied to get back to our apartment."

"I don't wonder. You look like you've been through—I don't know what. But I'll have you there in five minutes. My private car—"

Mr. Eric Stokes-Harding, noted author of primitive life and love, ate a hearty meal with his pretty spouse, after they had washed off the grime of another planet. He spent the next twelve hours in bed.

At the end of the month he delivered his promised story to his publishers, a thrilling tale of a man marooned on Venus, with a beautiful girl. The hero made stone tools, erected a dwelling for himself and his mate, hunted food for her, defended her from the mammoth saurian monsters of the Venerian jungles.

The book was a huge success.

Arthur C. Clarke (1917-) is among the unique writers who has received wide recognition beyond his special audience. His serious work on the exploration of space was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection; his science-fiction novel won critical acclaim; and he has been awarded the coveted Kalinga Prize for the popularization of science. It is remarkable to be able to include in this anthology one of Clarke's finest short stories which has not previously been collected in any form. "Castaway" owes its obscurity to the fact that it first appeared under the pen name of Charles Willis in a short-lived British magazine entitled *Fantasy*. It is safe to predict that it will be seen often in the future.

Castaway

BY ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Most of the matter in the universe is at temperatures so high that no chemical compounds can exist, and the atoms themselves are stripped of all but their inner electron screens. Only on those incredibly rare bodies known as planets can the familiar elements and their combinations exist and, in still rarer cases, give rise to the phenomenon known as life.—*Practically any astronomy book of the early 20th Century.*

The storm was still rising. He had long since ceased to struggle against it, although the ascending gas streams were carrying him into the bitterly cold regions ten thousand miles above his normal level. Dimly he was aware of his mistake: he should never have entered the area of disturbance, but the spot had developed so swiftly that there was now no chance of escape. The million-miles-an-hour wind had seized him as it rose from the depths and was carrying him up the great funnel it had torn in the photosphere—a tunnel already large enough to engulf a hundred worlds.

It was very cold. Around him carbon vapour was condensing in

clouds of incandescent dust, swiftly torn away by the raging winds. This was something he had never met before, but the short-lived particles of solid matter left no sensation as they whipped through his body. Presently they were no more than glowing streamers far below, their furious movement foreshortened to a gentle undulation.

He was now at a truly enormous height, and his velocity showed no signs of slackening. The horizon was almost fifty thousand miles away, and the whole of the great spot lay visible beneath. Although he possessed neither eyes nor organs of sight, the radiation patterns sweeping through his body built up a picture of the awesome scene below. Like a great wound through which the Sun's life was ebbing into space, the vortex was now thousands of miles deep. From one edge a long tongue of flame was reaching out to form a half-completed bridge, defying the gales sweeping vertically past it. In a few hours, if it survived, it might span the abyss and divide the spot in twain. The fragments would drift apart, the fires of the photosphere would overwhelm them, and soon the great globe would be unblemished again.

The Sun was still receding, and gradually into his slow, dim consciousness came the understanding that he could never return. The eruption that had hurled him into space had not given him sufficient velocity to escape forever, but a second giant force was beginning to exert its power. All his life he had been subjected to the fierce bombardment of solar radiation, pouring upon him from all directions. It was doing so no longer. The Sun now lay far beneath, and the force of its radiation was driving him out into space like a mighty wind. The great cloud of ions that was his body, more tenuous than air, was falling swiftly into the outer darkness.

Now the Sun was a globe of fire shrinking far behind, and the great spot no more than a black stain near the centre of its disc. Ahead lay darkness, utterly unrelieved, for his senses were far too coarse ever to detect the feeble light of the stars or the pale gleam of the circling planets. The only source of light he could ever know was dwindling from him. In a desperate effort to conserve his energy, he drew his body together into a tight, spherical cloud. Now he was almost as dense as air, but the electrostatic repulsion between his billions of constituent ions was too great for further concentration. When at last his strength weakened,

they would disperse into space and no trace of his existence would remain.

He never felt the increasing gravitational pull from far ahead, and was unconscious of his changing speed. But presently the first faint intimations of the approaching magnetic field reached his consciousness and stirred it into sluggish life. He strained his senses out into the darkness, but to a creature whose home was the photosphere of the Sun the light of all other bodies was billions of times too faint even to be glimpsed, and the steadily strengthening field through which he was falling was an enigma beyond the comprehension of his rudimentary mind.

The tenuous outer fringes of the atmosphere checked his speed, and he fell slowly towards the invisible planet. Twice he felt a strange, tearing wrench as he passed through the ionosphere; then, no faster than a falling snowflake, he was drifting down through the cold, dense gas of the lower air. The descent took many hours and his strength was waning when he came to rest on a surface hard beyond anything he had ever imagined.

The waters of the Atlantic were bathed with brilliant sunlight, but to him the darkness was absolute save for the faint gleam of the infinitely distant Sun. For eons he lay, incapable of movement, while the fires of consciousness burned lower within him and the last remnants of his energy ebbed away into the inconceivable cold.

It was long before he noticed the strange new radiation pulsing far off in the darkness—radiation of a kind he had never experienced before. Sluggishly he turned his mind towards it, considering what it might be and whence it came. It was closer than he had thought, for its movement was clearly visible and now it was climbing into the sky, approaching the Sun itself. But this was no second sun, for the strange illumination was waxing and waning, and only for a fraction of a cycle was it shining full upon him.

Nearer and nearer came that enigmatic glare; and as the throbbing rhythm of its brilliance grew fiercer he became aware of a strange, tearing resonance that seemed to shake the whole of his being. Now it was beating down upon him like a flail, tearing into his vitals and loosening his last hold on life itself. He had lost all control over the outer regions of his compressed but still enormous body.

The end came swiftly. The intolerable radiance was directly

overhead, no longer pulsing but pouring down upon him in one continuous flood. Then there was neither pain nor wonder, nor the dull longing for the great golden world he had lost forever . . .

From the streamlined fairing beneath the great flying-wing, the long pencil of the radar beam was sweeping the Atlantic to the horizon's edge. Spinning in synchronism on the Plan Position Indicator, the faintly visible line of the time-base built up a picture of all that lay beneath. At the moment the screen was empty, for the coast of Ireland was more than three hundred miles away. Apart from an occasional brilliant blue spot—which was all that the greatest surface vessel became from fifty thousand feet—nothing would be visible until, in three hours time, the eastern seaboard of America began to drift into the picture.

The navigator, checking his position continually by the North Atlantic radio lattice, seldom had any need for this part of the liner's radar. But to the passengers, the big skiatron indicator on the promenade deck was a source of constant interest, especially when the weather was bad and there was nothing to be seen below but the undulating hills and valleys of the cloud ceiling. There was still something magical, even in this age, about a radar landfall. No matter how often one had seen it before, it was fascinating to watch the pattern of the coastline forming on the screen, to pick out the harbours and the shipping and, presently, the hills and rivers and lakes of the land beneath.

To Edward Lindsey, returning from a week's leave in Europe, the Plan Position Indicator had a double interest. Fifteen years ago, as a young Coastal Command radio observer in the War of Liberation, he had spent long and tiring hours over these same waters, peering into a primitive forerunner of the great five-foot screen before him. He smiled wryly as his mind went back to those days. What would he have thought then, he wondered, if he could have seen himself as he was now, a prosperous accountant, travelling in comfort ten miles above the Atlantic at almost the velocity of sound? He thought also of the rest of *S for Sugar's* crew, and wondered what had happened to them in the intervening years.

At the edge of the scan, just crossing the three-hundred-mile range circle, a faint patch of light was beginning to drift into the picture. That was strange: there was no land there, for the Azores

were further to the south. Besides, this seemed too ill-defined to be an island. The only thing it could possibly be was a storm-cloud heavy with rain.

Lindsey walked to the nearest window and looked out. The weather was extraordinarily fine. Far below, the waters of the Atlantic were crawling eastwards towards Europe; even down to the horizon the sky was blue and cloudless.

He went back to the P.P.I. The echo was certainly a very curious one, approximately oval and as far as he could judge about ten miles long, although it was still too far away for accurate measurement. Lindsey did some rapid mental arithmetic. In twenty-five minutes it should be almost underneath them, for it was neatly bisected by the bright line that represented the aircraft's heading. Track? Course? Lord, how quickly one forgot that sort of thing! But it didn't matter—the wind could make little difference at the speed they were travelling. He would come back and have a look at it then, unless the gang in the bar got hold of him again.

Twenty minutes later he was even more puzzled. The tiny blue oval of light gleaming on the dark face of the screen was now only fifty miles away. If it were indeed a cloud, it was the strangest one he had ever seen. But the scale of the picture was still too small for him to make out any details.

The main controls of the indicator were safely locked away beneath the notice which read: PASSENGERS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO PLACE EMPTY GLASSES ON THE SKIATRON. However, one control had been left for the use of all comers. A massive three-position switch—guaranteed unbreakable—enabled anyone to select the tube's three different ranges: three hundred, fifty, and ten miles. Normally the three-hundred-mile picture was used, but the more restricted fifty-mile scan gave much greater detail and was excellent for sightseeing overland. The ten-mile range was quite useless and no one knew why it was there.

Lindsey turned the switch to 50, and the picture seemed to explode. The mysterious echo, which had been nearing the screen's centre, now lay at its edge once more, enlarged six-fold. Lindsey waited until the afterglow of the old picture had died away; then he leaned over and carefully examined the new.

The echo almost filled the gap between the forty- and fifty-mile range circles, and now that he could see it clearly its strangeness

almost took his breath away. From its centre radiated a curious network of filaments, while at its heart glowed a bright area perhaps two miles in length. It could only be fancy—yet he could have sworn that the central spot was pulsing very slowly.

Almost unable to believe his eyes, Lindsey stared into the screen. He watched in hypnotised fascination until the oval mist was less than forty miles away; then he ran to the nearest telephone and called for one of the ship's radio officers. While he was waiting, he went again to the observation port and looked out at the ocean beneath. He could see for at least a hundred miles—but there was absolutely nothing there but the blue Atlantic and the open sky.

It was a long walk from the control room to the promenade deck, and when Sub-Lieutenant Armstrong arrived, concealing his annoyance beneath a mask of polite but not obsequious service, the object was less than twenty miles away. Lindsey pointed to the skiatron.

"Look!" he said simply.

Sub-Lieutenant Armstrong looked. For a moment there was silence. Then came a curious, half-strangled ejaculation and he jumped back as if he had been stung. He leaned forward again and rubbed at the screen with his sleeve as if trying to remove something that shouldn't be there. Stopping himself in time, he grinned foolishly at Lindsey. Then he went to the observation window.

"There's nothing there. I've looked," said Lindsey.

After the initial shock, Armstrong moved with commendable speed. He ran back to the skiatron, unlocked the controls with his master key, and made a series of swift adjustments. At once the time-base began to whirl round at a greatly increased speed, giving a more continuous picture than before.

It was much clearer now. The bright nucleus *was* pulsating, and faint knots of light were moving slowly outwards along the radiating filaments. As he stared, fascinated, Lindsey suddenly remembered a glimpse he had once had of an amoeba under the microscope. Apparently the same thought had occurred to the Sub-Lieutenant.

"It—it looks alive!" he whispered incredulously.

"I know," said Lindsey. "What do you think it is?"

The other hesitated for a while. "I remember reading once that

Appleton or someone had detected patches of ionisation low down in the atmosphere. That's the only thing it can be."

"But its structure! How do you explain that?"

The other shrugged his shoulders. "I can't," he said bluntly.

It was vertically beneath them now, disappearing into the blind area at the centre of the screen. While they were waiting for it to emerge again they had another look at the ocean below. It was uncanny: there was still absolutely nothing to be seen. But the radar could not lie. Something *must* be there—

It was fading fast when it reappeared a minute later, fading as if the full power of the radar transmitter had destroyed its cohesion. For the filaments were breaking up, and even as they watched the ten-mile-long oval began to disintegrate. There was something awe-inspiring about the sight, and for some unfathomable reason Lindsey felt a surge of pity, as though he were witnessing the death of some gigantic beast. He shook his head angrily, but he could not get the thought out of his mind.

Twenty miles away, the last traces of ionisation were dispersing to the winds. Soon eye and radar screen alike saw only the unbroken waters of the Atlantic rolling endlessly eastwards as if no power could ever disturb them.

And across the screen of the great indicator, two men stared speechlessly at one another, each afraid to guess what lay in the other's mind.

Robert Bloch (1917-) is internationally renowned today as the author of *Psycho*, the book from which Alfred Hitchcock's extraordinarily successful motion picture was made. As an ever-enlarging series of movie credits accrue to his name, Robert Bloch is becoming known as the writer who got a "lucky break." His answer to that is: "But all those 'breaks' would have been meaningless if I hadn't kept sitting on my butt and working . . . 25 years of *not* goofing off, of skipping the party today because I had to finish a story by tomorrow." "One Way to Mars" is a sample of the type of thing Bloch was doing while waiting to be "discovered."

One Way to Mars

BY ROBERT BLOCH

Joe Gibson was higher than hell and he didn't know where he was and he didn't care as long as the bar was in front of him and he was laughing and somebody was singing in a sad voice very far away and he said sure he'd have another one and then—

There was this character in the brown overcoat.

He was an odd little whack and he kept his pockets and his collar turned up and his hat-brim pulled down low like an extra in a gangster movie.

The whack was talking to him but it took a minute before the words reached him and made sense.

"Trouble with you, friend, you need a little vacation," said the whack. "Sort of get away from it all."

"Sure, sure," said Gibson, trying to find his glass. It was lost down there somewhere in the fog.

"I've been watching you, friend," said the whack. "Said to myself, there's a man with trouble. There's a man who needs to get out of all this. You look lost, friend."

"Sure," said Gibson. "Sure. I'm a lost soul. Will you have a drink or kindly get the hell out of here?"

The little whack didn't pay any attention. He went right on talking in an earnest voice. A Dutch uncle.

"I'm with the Ace Travel Bureau, Buddy. How'd you like to buy a ticket?"

"Where to?" asked Gibson, as if he gave a damn.

The whack in the brown overcoat shrugged.

"How about a ticket to Mars?" he asked.

Gibson let that one sink in for a minute. Then he grinned.

"Mars, eh? How much'll it cost me?"

"Oh, I don't know. Make it cheap for you. Let's say \$2.88."

"\$2.88 to Mars? Sounds very reasonable." Gibson paused. "Is this a round trip or just one way?"

The whack coughed apologetically.

"Uh—one way. You see, we haven't been able to figure out how to make a return trip yet."

"Bet you don't sell many tickets," said Gibson.

"We have our customers," said the character in the overcoat. "You interested?"

"I don't think so." Gibson found the glass, drew it up through the fog and swallowed the scotch with a shudder.

"You will be interested some other time, perhaps?" coaxed the whack.

"Listen, you—" said Gibson, suddenly.

"I've had you on my list for quite a while, friend," the whack mumbled, not noticing how Gibson's fist closed around the glass in his hand. "I know we'll do business sooner or later."

"How about right now?" said Gibson, softly.

He drew his hand back, intending to smash the whack in the face. He was set for it, his body began to pivot, and he braced himself for the moment when the blow would land solid, hard.

And then he followed his fist and the fist shot out, out past the stars and into the darkness beyond. Joe Gibson went with it and fell through the darkness as it tunneled down . . . deep down . . .

"Jeez! what a beaut you had last night," said Maxie, stirring the cup before he placed it to Joe Gibson's lips. "Were you stinko—but completely."

"Shut up," said Gibson.

"The face on the barroom floor. Out cold," said Maxie, forcing the contents of the cup down Gibson's unwilling throat.

"Forget it," said Gibson, as soon as he could talk.

Maxie shrugged.

"OK, pal," he said. "I'll forget it. You're riding high. I line you up a five hundred a week deal with the hottest name combo in the business and what do you do? Go out and plaster yourself over half the brass rails in town and pass out in front of the guy who does the pillar for *Billboard*. You tell me to forget it. So I'm willing to forget everything—and that includes you."

Gibson sat up in bed. He moved very quickly for a man with a hangover.

"No, Maxie," he said. "I didn't mean it. Honest I didn't. I'm sorry. And I never would of socked the guy if he hadn't gone and cracked wise about this Mars stuff. I'm just standing and minding my own business when he ups with his wise lip about a trip. So I let him have it and went out on my face."

Maxie stared at him.

"I saw it happen, Joe," he murmured. "You're standing at the bar with nobody within ten feet of you on either side. You start mumbling to yourself, and then you turn around and haul off and go down for the count. Hitting air."

"But the whack in the brown overcoat—" Gibson began.

"I didn't see any whack in a brown overcoat," said Maxie, slowly. "All I see is a whack named Joe Gibson doing a nose-dive with a snootful."

Gibson sighed. "That's how it was?"

"That's how it was."

"I had the snakes," Joe Gibson shuddered.

Maxie sat down on the bed.

"Remember the old days, Joe?" he asked. "You were a punk from K.C. when I picked you out of the Rialto pit. Playing non-union dates at stags. I spotted you, got you the bookings. Made you work. Brought out your style."

"Where's your violin?" asked Gibson. "You need soft music for this line."

"I'm not handing you a line," said Maxie. "I'm just telling you."

"What are you telling me?" Joe Gibson sat straight up and brushed Maxie's hand off his shoulder. "So all right. You picked me up in the gutter and you made a big horn out of me. Not a side man, a big horn. Big enough for Goodman, Shaw, Miller,

anybody. Like hell you did! It's me, Joe Gibson—I'm the guy who blows his heart out through the tube. You know a good thing when you see it, so all right, you build me up. But you get your ten per cent out of it, don't you? I'm the musician. You're just the flesh peddler."

Maxie didn't move. His smile was low and sad.

"It's not that, Joe," he sighed. "I don't want the credit. You were a good kid. You worked hard. But not any more."

He rose. "I don't figure it," he said. "First there's the lush act you pulled in Scranton, when you got stinko on the stand. And the way you run out on that combo I set for the Rainbow Room, almost. And the time I hauled you out of the jam in Chi when you didn't show for the Decca recordings. Between that wrongo babe of yours and the rotgut you're getting a pretty good reputation for yourself, huh? Joe Gibson, one of the best boys on trumpet in the business. But don't buy him! Because he's also one of the best boys on blondes and bourbon."

Joe Gibson was sitting almost bent double. His head hung in his lap and he sobbed.

"Awright," said Maxie. "I don't know what's got into you. I don't know what you're scared of. Maybe you'll snap out of it all of a sudden. Don't make me promises, though. I'm gonna see what I can do. Maybe I can square that booking. The rest is up to you. Get some rest. Call you tomorrow."

Maxie went out.

Joe Gibson slid back under the covers. His face gradually stopped twitching. He prepared to sleep.

The phone rang.

Joe Gibson slid one hand over to the bedside cradle phone.

"Hello," said a familiar voice. Gibson couldn't place it so he grunted softly.

"I was just wondering," said the voice, "about our little talk last night. Made up your mind yet about that trip to Mars?"

Joe Gibson slammed the receiver down with a bang. His head disappeared under the covers and he lay shuddering and sobbing for a long time.

Opening night was solid.

It had to be. The week before it was just pure hell. Maxie had worked like a dog sewing the contract up again. Joe Gibson sweated the alcohol out of his system in rehearsal.

Now he sat on the bandstand waiting for the downbeat and he had the trumpet poised in his lap. He knew it was all right.

There was just one thing wrong. His eyes. Joe Gibson's eyes hurt him. They hurt him because of all the squinting he'd done for the past week. Squinting at faces in crowds, faces he saw from bus tops or through windows.

Joe Gibson was looking for somebody. A little whack in a brown overcoat. He was afraid of seeing him. And somehow he was more afraid because he *didn't* see him.

Now he gazed down at the dim dance floor, blinded by the harsh spot from overhead, and he squinted again.

So his eyes hurt, and all the time he kept kidding himself that it was all right, he was all right, this was just another opening—

But he prayed for the moment when he'd put the horn to his lips, and blow out all the fear and the worry, blow out the thought of squinting and the thoughts that lay behind the squinting.

The hands holding the trumpet trembled and little beads of sweat dropped along the sides of the horn.

One last hasty glimpse of the tables bordering the dance floor. No brown overcoat.

Downbeat.

Joe Gibson raised his horn.

Then it *was* all right for sure.

The crowd was dancing. Joe Gibson didn't even bother to look for the whack any more. His eyes were closed. He was out of this world. Riding for the stars on a trumpet, sweeping up with a jazz beat.

It was hot, solid; something to hang onto. He twisted each note, reluctant to let it go. He wanted a solo ride, wanted to play his horn, keep his eyes closed, keep his brain closed to everything except the sending sound. Out of this world.

He was all right at last. Completely grooved through each number until intermission.

Then Joe Gibson sat back after the signature and realized for the first time that his shirt and dickey were wringing wet and his new tux was ripped under the left arm. He had been too solid to notice. And now the other boys were leaving the stand for a smoke and the crowd drifted off the dance floor.

Joe Gibson got up. He saw Maxie waiting for him over behind

the bandstand. He tucked his horn into the case and stood up straight, took a quick stride to the steps behind the stand.

He glanced out at the deserted floor. The deserted floor that was not *quite* deserted.

A brown blur spun out there beyond the glare of the lights. A solitary figure weaved into a solo dance of its own. And the figure whirled up to the platform in a strutting glide, and Joe Gibson saw the face under the pulled-down hat brim and then he heard the words rustle up.

"Enjoyed your playing. You're almost ready for your Mars trip now, I believe."

Joe Gibson cleared the bandstand in a leap. He wasn't quite fast enough. The brown overcoat bobbed off between the tables. Nobody seemed to notice it at all.

But almost everybody saw Joe Gibson jump from the bandstand and run screaming out of the room into the streets beyond.

Joe was all right as long as Max stayed in the room with him but then the croaker told him to step outside and he began to talk to Joe alone.

The croaker was a smooth soft-speaking guy and he seemed to know his business. Maxie said he was the best psychiatrist in the racket and Maxie knew about those things.

But now Maxie had stepped out and Joe was lying down on the couch with a light shining in his eyes, and the croaker was telling him to relax, take it easy, stop thinking and just say whatever popped into his head.

It reminded Joe too much of those gangster pictures where they give a guy the third degree. But at that it was better to lie down than to have the croaker tapping him on the knee and making him stretch out his arms with his eyes closed. That was supposed to test your reflexes, but Joe Gibson didn't give a damn about his reflexes. He was afraid of the man in the brown overcoat. The man he couldn't catch, the man he couldn't even see on the street the night he chased him out of the cafe and lost his job.

Joe began to explain this to the croaker, choosing his words very carefully, because after all he didn't want this psychiatrist to think there was anything the matter with him *really*.

It wasn't as if he heard voices, or stuff like that. There was nothing wrong with him except seeing that whack.

But the croaker kept asking questions, and pretty soon he had Joe admitting all kinds of stuff—not so much admitting as remembering. Dizzy ideas he had when he was a kid. Screwy things.

Like when he used to sneak off to sit in the coal cellar after his old man had a fight with his old lady. He'd fall asleep down in the basement and dream that he wasn't in a coal cellar at all—that he wasn't really anywhere. There was no coal cellar in those dreams and no upstairs, either. No outside and no people. There was just the dark and Joe Gibson.

Joe told the croaker a lot of dizzy things like that. He could remember more and more as he lay there under the lamp. He told about getting his first horn and practicing indoors all the time so he wouldn't have to play with the gang outside.

He told about getting his first job and the way he'd run off without collecting his dough from the stick, and then he got to telling how he loved music—particularly the kind where you didn't have to read notes but just played it out of your own head and it did something to you, the way liquor did.

Then Joe realized he was getting his story pretty close to *now*, and he would have to tell about the man in the brown overcoat and he didn't want to do that, so he talked louder and faster to keep the thoughts back but it didn't work, and then he was spitting it all out and the croaker was firing questions in a very low voice, and he said, yes, he'd seen the man at the bar and no, he wasn't queer-looking and yes, he did have a face and the skin around the mouth was like crumpled tissue-paper.

Funny . . . Joe didn't know he remembered about the skin around the whack's mouth until the croaker asked him.

Now it felt kind of good to get it off his chest. So he told all about it, what he said and what the guy said about the Ace Travel Bureau and the \$2.88 ticket to Mars, one way only, and about the other customers the man said they got, and he told about passing out.

Then he explained about the phone call and the dance floor. Only he kept insisting to the croaker that he didn't have anything to drink this last time, and he saw the little whack in the brown

overcoat just as plain, and he could hear his voice, so he wasn't nuts.

The croaker smiled and said Joe was all right and then he called Maxie back. They stood talking together for a while in the next room and Joe couldn't catch anything they said.

The croaker came in again and showed him a telephone book. It was the Classified one, and he opened it up to where the travel bureaus were and there was no Ace Travel Bureau in the list.

That made Joe feel a little better until the croaker began to ask him what he knew about the planet Mars. Then he realized what the guy was driving at, and shut up like a clam. The croaker asked him what the number 288 meant to him and Joe played dumb like a fox.

So the croaker smiled and told him to get up and he should come back in a couple of days when they checked the physical tests.

Maxie told Joe to run along to the hotel alone, he'd be up in a few minutes after he settled the bill with the psychiatrist.

So Joe got up and walked out.

There was a patient in the waiting room reading a *National Geographic*, but when Joe walked through, the patient put his magazine down and Joe saw the little man in the brown overcoat.

"I've got your ticket all made out," said the whack. "You can leave today if you like."

Joe didn't say anything. He just stood there, staring down at the crinkly crumpled skin around the whack's lips and the little eyes under the shadow of his hat brim. Joe looked at the brown overcoat with the stains on it, and the big ragged moth holes along the collar.

He took a deep breath and he could smell the coat and something else—something old and stale and sour.

So Joe knew he could see and hear and smell this thing and all the while the little guy was grinning up at him and then he reached into his pocket and Joe knew he was fumbling around for his ticket to Mars.

This time Joe was ready. He jumped him in a flash, and he felt his fingers close around something and choke and choke and everything turned red and black and back to red again and some-

body was screaming, way off in the distance and it was Joe screaming but he didn't know that any more because he went out cold.

When Joe Gibson woke up he was lying in bed again and he felt good. Very good.

At first he couldn't figure it out and then he remembered why. Because he'd jumped the whack, of course. He wondered if he'd killed him. He couldn't have or he would be in jail now, not in his hotel room.

Still, it was a good feeling. He wanted to celebrate.

Maxie came in. He didn't look as though he felt so good.

Joe began to tell him he was all right now, but Maxie kept mumbling something about the fit he'd thrown in the croaker's office.

Joe proved he wasn't crazy right then and there. He admitted he had thrown a fit and he didn't say anything about choking the whack in the brown overcoat.

"I think I'll get dressed and go out for a walk," Joe said.

He knew Maxie wouldn't like this, but he felt too good to care.

But Maxie didn't try to stop him. He said, "OK," and sat down on the bed and lit a cigar while Joe dressed. He stared at the carpet and frowned when Joe began to whistle.

"Joe," he said.

"Yeah?"

"You aren't gonna take a walk."

"Who says?"

"You got to take things easy."

"Sure. I am taking things easy. I'll be back early."

"No. That's not what I mean, Joe. You're going to rest up in bed. In a sanatorium."

"What the—"

"I been talking to the Doc. They're coming for you in half an hour. It's nothing to get excited about now, you'll be out again in—"

That's the way it was going to be. He understood the setup now.

Joe walked over to the bureau.

"Where are you going?" asked Maxie.

"Got to get my cigarettes. Don't worry. It's all right. I understand everything."

"After all, it's for your own good," said Maxie, still not looking at Joe.

"Of course it is," Joe said. He opened the drawer.

"No hard feelings," said Maxie.

"No hard feelings," said Joe.

He turned away from the bureau and shot Maxie twice through the stomach with the gun he'd pulled from the drawer.

Joe wasn't crazy and he'd never felt better in his life, or else he couldn't have figured it so perfect.

He went downstairs and checked out, paid his bill with the dough he found on Maxie, and grabbed a cab. If he could get over to Jersey in the supper rush, they'd never find him.

So he went to the station and got his ticket and ran for the 5:14 and made it just as the train started to pull out.

He walked down the aisle and laughed because he remembered that the little whack in the brown overcoat was dead. There was nothing to worry about now except this crowd, all these people. He wanted to get away for a while and think out his next move.

So he looked for the washroom at the end of the car and opened the door and walked in. The light wasn't working and it was dark in there, but Joe could see out the window.

It took a minute for his eyes to focus right, but then he saw what was outside. Just a big black emptiness with stars sweeping past, glaring and winking.

Then the door opened, and Joe knew it was the conductor. But the conductor was wearing a brown overcoat and his hat had a pulled-down brim. A hand reached out for Joe's ticket.

He stared at it in the light from the stars, and read his name and the price and the destination—and then there was nothing for Joe Gibson to do but stand there and wait while he rushed on and on, out of this world.

STRANGE SIGNPOSTS

An Anthology of the Fantastic

Edited by Sam Moskowitz
and Roger Elwood

The world of the fantastic enlarges the scope of the writer's imagination—and also that of the reader's. Ranging from the classic to the modern, from the most esoteric to the well known, each of the stories in this fantasy anthology is a model of its kind. The stories are unique, truly classics in the field of fantasy.

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THE CONTENTS OF
STRANGE SIGNPOSTS
An Anthology of the Fantastic

THE LAST MAN

by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

MELLONTA TAUTA

by Edgar Allan Poe

RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

HANS SCHNAP'S SPY-GLASS

by Erckmann-Chatrian

THE CHRONIC ARGONAUTS

by H. G. Wells

THE BEGUM'S FORTUNE

by Jules Verne

FRANK READE, JR.'S, AIR WONDER

by Luis P. Senarens

THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS

by H. P. Lovecraft

THE MAN WHO SAW THE FUTURE

by Edmond Hamilton

PROWLER OF THE WASTELANDS

by Harl Vincent

SKELETON MEN OF JUPITER

by Edgar Rice Burroughs

DOODAD

by Ray Bradbury

THE COSMIC EXPRESS

by Jack Williamson

CASTAWAY

by Arthur C. Clarke

ONE WAY TO MARS

by Robert Bloch